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Govt to order CBI inquiry if SIT probe fails: CM

'Our stand is clear that we will uncover the truth regarding Zubeen's death'



GUWAHATI, Sept 25: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said the state government would recommend a CBI inquiry if at any stage the SIT probe into singer Zubeen Garg's death in Singapore is found to be "unsatisfactory". Sarma appealed to people to have faith in the SIT probe and

not circulate rumours on social media, which, according to him, could hamper the investigations. A 10-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed under the leadership of CID Special DGP Munna Prasad Gupta to investigate Garg's death due to drowning in the sea in the South-

East Asian country. The SIT is committed to investigating this case thoroughly, and if it fails on any account, "we will not hesitate to hand over the case to the CBI," he said.

"Our stand is clear that we will uncover the truth of what happened that day by all possible means, and we will not compromise in this matter in any way," he added.

He said the SIT will question those who had accompanied Zubeen — members of the Assam Association in Singapore and organisers of the North East India Festival (NEIF) — and "this will take some time."

The CM said when NEIF's chief organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta returns to Assam, he will be summoned and interrogated. "Investigations will proceed step by step," (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

SIT raids residences of Shyamkanu, Siddhartha

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: Assam Police's Special Investigating Team (SIT), probing the death of singer Zubeen Garg, conducted separate raids at the residences of Northeast India Festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta and his manager Siddhartha Sharma on Thursday, officials said.

An SIT team visited the Geetanagar residence of Mahanta, where none of his family members, except for two helpers, were present.

Another team went to Sharma's apartment in Dhirenpara area and found it locked.

The apartment's lock was broken in the presence of a magistrate, and a search was conducted by the team.

Sharma's mother, brother and sister also lived in the apartment, but they were not seen since the day Zubeen died, according to residents of the building.

The Assam government has constituted a 10-member SIT, led by Special DGP M P Gupta, to investigate the singer's death in Singapore due to drowning in the sea on September 19. Zubeen had gone there to perform in the festival. (PTI)

NDA constituents to head BTC, says Himanta

Counting of votes to take place today

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said the NDA will form the next council in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) despite the BJP facing a "big setback" after it had to cancel its campaign three days before the September 22 polls due to the death of singer Zubeen Garg.

The BJP, which contested the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) polls independently for the first time, had to cancel its campaign three days before the polls due to Garg's death, the CM said on the sidelines of a programme here.

"The cancellation of the campaign three days before the polls was a big setback. This may adversely impact our performance, but I am not worried as an NDA partner will form the council,"

Sarma claimed. The United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), led by current BTC Chief Pramod Boro, and Bodo People's Front (BPF), led by former chief Hagrama Mohilary, are both members of the NDA.

The counting of votes for the council polls will be held on September 26.

"The BJP's result may not be as expected by us, but it will definitely be better than last time," he said.

The Congress will not get any seat and "all the 40 seats in the council will be won by the UPPL, BPF and BJP-all NDA constituents," the CM said.

"The council will, however, not be formed by all three, but by two NDA constituents, and this will be decided after the results are announced," (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Ladakh violence: Uneasy calm, heavy police deployment in Leh; 50 detained

LEH, Sept 25: An uneasy calm prevailed in Ladakh on Thursday as police and paramilitary troops strictly enforced a curfew in Leh town, a day after clashes between security personnel and protesters demanding statehood and constitutional protection left four people dead and more than 80 injured.

At least 50 people have been detained so far in connection with the violence that broke out on Wednesday during the shutdown called by Leh Apex Body (LAB) to demand an extension of the Sixth Schedule and statehood for Ladakh.

The protesters, according to officials, indulged in arson and violence, with mobs burning the BJP office, a number of vehicles, and ransacking the Hill Council headquarters.

"The situation in the curfew-hit areas is under control. There are no incidents to report from anywhere," a police officer told PTI, confirming the detentions.

The escalation of violence had led climate activist Sonam Wangchuk to abandon his fortnight-long hunger strike, which he was undertaking in

favour of the demands. Wangchuk has denounced the violence.

"This is the saddest day for Ladakh...the path we are treading for the last five years was peaceful," Wangchuk said, appealing to the youth to "stop the violence forthwith as it only causes harm to our cause".

The Centre, however, blamed the activist for the unrest, alleging that the mob violence was guided by his "provocative statements" and claiming that "politically motivated" people were unhappy with the progress of on-going talks between the government and Ladakhi groups.

The Union Home Ministry, which reiterated its commitment to providing "adequate constitutional safeguards," also noted that police are probing the possible involvement of foreign hands, citing that three of the injured were Nepalese citizens.

Wangchuk termed the home ministry's allegations against him as a "scapegoat tactic" intended to avoid dealing with the Himalayan region's core problems. Reacting to the MHA's statement that had blamed him for provoking the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

BTC Election 2025: Kokrajhar braces for counting day amid tight security



HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, Sept 25: The stage is set for the counting of votes for the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections, 2025, which will be held on Friday under heavy security across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). Counting will begin at 8 am in the district and sub-divisional headquarters. Kokrajhar District Administration has made elaborate arrangements to ensure a

smooth, transparent, and impartial process. The Second Level Randomization of Counting Personnel was conducted on Thursday at the DC's Conference Hall, supervised by District Commissioner and Returning Officer Masanda M Pertin in the presence of General Observers and other officials. Personnel were assigned constituency-wise for deployment in the counting halls.

A comprehensive training session for counting supervisors, assistants, Grade-IV staff, and postal ballot counting teams was also held at Kokrajhar University on Thursday.

The first round of training had been conducted on September 18.

District officials reviewed final arrangements with Assistant Returning Officers to strengthen coordination and ensure strict adherence to Election Commission guidelines.

The fate of 316 candidates from major political parties, including ruling UPPL, BJP, BPF, and Congress, will be decided.

While UPPL, BPF and Congress contested all 40 constituencies, BJP fielded candidates in 30 seats of the 40-member BTCLA.

Prominent candidates in the fray include BTR CEM and UPPL president Pramod Boro, Deputy CEM Gabinda Chandra Basumatary, Kampa Borgoyary, Chandan Brahma, Raju Kumar Narzary, Hagrama Mohilary (BPF), Rihan Daimary, Rabirah Narzary, Charan Boro and Rajib Brahma (BJP).

Speaking ahead of counting day, CEM and UPPL chief Pramod Boro exuded confidence that his party would (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Freedom fighter Bijoy Chandra Baruah dies at 99

HT Correspondent JORHAT, Sept 25: Bijoy Chandra Baruah, a freedom fighter against British rule and a resident of Charigaon here, passed away at his residence on Tuesday night (September 23) due to age-related ailments. He was 99.

Baruah was the eldest son of late Lakhyeswar Baruah, who had declared Charigaon Mouza an independent sovereign republic in August 1942 during the Quit India Movement.

He is survived by his wife, a son, two daughters and a large number of relatives and well-wishers.

On Wednesday, Jorhat Deputy Commissioner Jay Shivani and Senior Superintendent of Police Shwetank Mishra visited Baruah's residence and paid floral tributes before his mortal remains.

A police contingent also presented a salute as part of the State honours accorded to the freedom fighter.

Some Assam Community Association members helping with probe into Zubeen Garg's death

SINGAPORE, Sept 25: The Assam Association Singapore has said that some of its members are currently assisting the investigating authority in the probe into the death of singer Zubeen Garg.

"As some of our members are currently assisting the investigating authorities in their inquiry into the tragic demise of our beloved Zubeen Da, the Assam Association Singapore is not permitted to make a public comment on the issue until the investigation process is complete and/or permitted by the investigating authorities under the law," the Management Committee, Assam Association Singapore, said in a post on Instagram on Wednesday. The committee did not name the investigating authority.

"The untimely passing of our beloved Zubeen Da has left the entire Assamese community in Singapore in deep sorrow. We stand together in grief and extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, as well as to our community in Assam and beyond," it said. The iconic singer was on a yacht trip to Singapore's Saint John Island with some members of the Assamese community here on September 19 when he died. Garg was to perform at a festival, celebrating the culture and tradition of northeast India, along with the celebration of the 60th year of India-Singapore Diplomatic Relations and to celebrate India ASEAN Year of Tourism. It was to be held 19-21 September. Due to his death, all events were cancelled by the High Commission of India here. (PTI)

Police baton charge protestors outside residence of Zubeen's manager



GUWAHATI, Sept 25: A group of people, which had gathered outside the residence of singer Zubeen Garg's manager, hurled stones at police vehicles following which the security personnel baton-

charged them on Thursday, officials said.

The police personnel were escorting an SIT team to the manager Siddhartha Sharma's house in connection with its probe into the

singer's death.

The angry protestors were demanding his immediate arrest for being allegedly responsible for the singer's death.

They also tried to break open the main entrance gate to the apartment block premises but a heavy deployment of police force prevented them.

When the SIT team left the compound, the protestors hurled stones at the vehicles and prevented them from leaving and some attacked the police personnel on duty at the gate.

The police resorted to a mild lathi-charge to disperse the crowd so that the police vehicles could move out of the area.

The police have detained two persons from (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Asam Sahitya Sabha demands Bharat Ratna for Zubeen Garg

HT Correspondent JORHAT, Sept 25: The Asam Sahitya Sabha has urged that the country's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna, be posthumously conferred on legendary singer and musician Zubeen Garg.

Addressing newsmen at Chandra Kanta Handique Bhawan, the Sabha's central office here on Thursday, Asam Sahitya Sabha president Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami said he has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting that Zubeen be honoured with the award in recognition of his unparalleled contribution to the cultural field and his significant impact on Assam's social life.

Referring to the outpouring of love and affection for the musical icon in Assam and across the coun-

try following his demise, Dr Goswami said he has also written to the state chief minister, seeking his support for the move to honour the artist who took Assamese music and culture to the global stage.

The Sabha president further announced that all works of Zubeen—his songs and writings—would be published in Assamese, English and Hindi by 2026.

A budget of ₹50 lakh has been earmarked for the project, which will be headed by Tridib Baruah.

After the initial publication, the Sabha plans to translate and release his works in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam as well.

Dr Goswami also appreciated the state government's efforts in bringing Zubeen's body to Assam, arranging for (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

GU to introduce four-year integrated teacher education programme from 2026-27

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Sept 25: Gauhati University (GU) is set to launch a four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) beginning from the academic session 2026-27, marking a significant milestone in strengthening teacher education in the region.

The initiative follows the receipt of a Letter of Intent (LoI) from the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) on September 18, granting GU the nod to offer the programme through its Department of Education.

The ITEP will include integrated B.A.-B.Ed. and B.Sc.-B.Ed. courses in accordance with the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The programme seeks to equip students with both disciplinary knowledge and professional training in a single curriculum, replac-

ing the traditional two-step route of separate undergraduate and B.Ed. degrees.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Nani Gopal Mahanta welcomed the development, describing it as a transformative step for higher education in Assam. "The introduction of ITEP at Gauhati University will strengthen teacher education in the Northeast and help us prepare a new generation of skilled, innovative, and future-ready educators. This is a crucial step in driving educational transformation not only in Assam but across the region," he said.

With this initiative, GU joins the select group of universities across India implementing the NEP 2020 roadmap for integrated teacher preparation, ensuring students gain early exposure to pedagogical training, classroom practices, and multidisciplinary learning. The university believes the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Despite global disruptions and uncertainty, India's growth remains attractive

Modi spotlights 'time-tested' Russia ties amid trade tensions with US

GREATER NOIDA, Sept 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday underscored India's "time-tested" partnership with Russia, highlighting long-standing defence cooperation between the two countries -- a remark that comes amid ongoing US concerns over India's continued oil trade with Moscow.

The Prime Minister -- who made the remarks at the UP International Trade Show, where Russia is the international partner -- again made a pitch for atmanirbharta or self-reliance, saying a country like India does not want to depend on anyone.

"This time, the country partner of the trade show is Russia. That means we are further strengthening a time-tested partnership through this trade show," the Prime Minister said.

His remarks came amid strain in ties between India and the US following the Trump administration imposing highest 50 per cent



tariffs on Indian imports and balking at New Delhi's continued purchase of Russian oil.

external dependence. "The country must become self-reliant, every product that can be made in India should be made here," Modi said.

"Soon, production of AK-203 rifle will begin from a factory set up with Russia's help. A defence corridor is also being set up in Uttar Pradesh. Production of several weapons, including BrahMos missiles has already started."

"In India, we are developing a vibrant defence sector, creating an ecosystem where every component bears the mark of 'Made in India,'" he said, highlighting Uttar Pradesh's significant role in this transformation.

He called upon all stakeholders to invest and manufacture in Uttar Pradesh, which boasts of a robust and expanding network of millions of MSMEs, and assured all support to them.

Modi further said despite global disruptions and uncertainty, India's growth remains attractive.

He reiterated that the nation's resolve and guiding mantra is (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India's resilience stands out amid increased global uncertainties: Sitharaman

PUNE, Sept 25: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said India's resilience stands out due to its strong macroeconomic fundamentals amid increasing global uncertainties.

Speaking at the 91st Foundation Day celebrations of the Bank of Maharashtra, the Union Finance Minister said the uncertainty in the global environment has increased over the past year, and its impact is being felt across countries.

"But amidst all these uncertain global situations, India's resilience stands out and several favourable factors, such as strong macroeconomic fundamentals, a young demographic, and greater reliance on domestic demand, provide the core strength to the Indian economy," she noted.

Sitharaman said the economic resilience has continued, particularly in the April-June quarter this year, as well, where India's GDP has grown by 7.8 per cent.

"India's resilience is not accidental. They reflect proactive fiscal and monetary policies, bold structural reforms, massive infrastructure creation, both physical and digital, improved governance and enhanced competitiveness over the last decade," she said.

The finance minister also highlighted that S&P upgraded India's sovereign credit rating to 'BBB' (from BBB-) in August 2025 after 18 years, and Morningstar DBRS



upgraded India to 'BBB' from BBB (low) in May 2025.

Recently, Japanese credit rating agency Rating and Investment Information (R&I) upgraded India's long-term sovereign credit rating to 'BBB+' from 'BBB'.

Sitharaman further said that with uncertainty remaining a defining feature of the global landscape, the role of banks becomes even more critical, not just as custodians of savings, but as engines of growth, providing the finance and support that businesses and entrepreneurs need to navigate volatility, seize opportunities and drive innovation.

"One principle, which we can never forget to adhere to, is adhering to the core principle of customer trust, which is the foundation of banking," she said.

She emphasised that every complaint must be seen as an opportunity to improve, innovate and reinforce trust.

Grievance redressal must go hand-in-hand with root cause analysis, systemic corrections in products, processes and conduct, and a commitment to ensure the same complaint does not arise again, Sitharaman noted.

She further said the success of UPI shows what interoperability can achieve. A recent IMF note highlights the potential of UPI's interoperable design as a model for the world.

"It is, however, important to remember that digitalisation alone is not enough. Integrity, empathy and human judgment remain irreplaceable," the minister pointed out.

Speaking on the occasion, Department of Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju said public sector banks should increase their focus on MSMEs.

They should provide more loans to MSMEs, he said, adding that education loans should also be given priority.

He urged banks to see that no education loan application should be rejected.

Nagaraju also said that banks should enhance their lending towards agriculture and allied activities.

In the same breadth, he asked banks to be vigilant about the quality of loans.

In her speech, the finance minister also lauded Bank of Maharashtra's role in deepening financial inclusion across India.

Bank of Maharashtra's return on assets (RoA) of 1.8 per cent in fiscal 2024-25 was way ahead of the average RoA of PSBs, which stood at 1.1 per cent.

Its CASA ratio of 53.3 per cent is the highest among public sector banks (PSBs), where the average CASA ratio is 38.8 per cent, and it also surpasses the majority of private sector banks.

As of June 30, 2025, the bank's gross NPA stood at 1.74 per cent, and net NPAs were 0.18 per cent, at a multi-year low.

The provision coverage ratio improved to 98.36 per cent. (PTI)

GoDaddy offers Navaratri Special Domain Deals at ₹99

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: GoDaddy, the global company empowering everyday entrepreneurs, has announced Navaratri special deals under its ongoing September Super Savings campaign, offering select domain names at just ₹99 for a one-year term.

For the week of September 23-29, 2025, customers across India can purchase a .live domain at this festive price, enabling them to create or expand their digital presence in time for the peak shopping season.

Officials said the initiative is designed to support small businesses and entrepreneurs during Navaratri, a time of high consumer demand, when establishing a strong online identity can significantly boost visibility and sales.

By securing a relevant domain name, businesses can build trust, enhance discoverability, and attract more customers.

The company stated that new top-level domains (TLDs) will continue to be rolled out weekly throughout September, offering customers more choice and value.

The promotion is available exclusively to new customers in India through the official GoDaddy website.

According to GoDaddy, the festive campaign reflects its commitment to providing affordable digital tools that help Indian entrepreneurs showcase their products and services more effectively during the festive season.

ICICI Prudential Life achieves industry-leading claim settlement ratio of 99.60% in Q1-FY2026



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has emerged as an industry leader with a claim settlement ratio of 99.60% for the first quarter of FY2026 (April-June 2025).

The company also recorded an impressive average turnaround time of 1.1 days for settling non-investigated death claims, reflecting its focus on speed, transparency and customer-centric service.

According to company officials, ICICI Prudential Life settled death claims worth

₹406.89 crore during the quarter.

A significant portion of these, amounting to ₹74.72 crore, were processed under its 'Claim for Sure' initiative, which guarantees settlement of all eligible claims within one working day after submission of required documents.

Commenting on the achievement, Amish Banker, chief operations officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said: "Claims are where promises meet reality. At ICICI Prudential Life, every claim is han-

dled with utmost sensitivity and processed quickly. This is reflected in our industry-leading claims settlement ratio of 99.60% in Q1-FY2026. Leveraging data analytics along with AI and ML-based technologies is enabling us to quickly and efficiently process claims."

The company has increasingly relied on digital enablers to simplify the claims journey, allowing customers and nominees to file claims online, submit supporting documents digitally and track claim status in real time.

Officials said these technological interventions, combined with a focus on empathetic service, have played a pivotal role in achieving the strong claim settlement performance.

The company added that its efforts are aligned with its broader goal of ensuring financial protection for policyholders' families through a seamless and efficient claims experience.

Rupee recovers 7 paise from all-time low to close at 88.68 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Sept 25: The rupee moved in a tight range to settle 7 paise higher at 88.68 (provisional) against the American currency on Thursday due to suspected RBI intervention amid a strong US dollar and weak domestic markets. Forex traders said the HI-B visa fee hike and surge in crude oil prices pressured the rupee. However, the selling of greenbacks by exporters and reports of intervention by the RBI prevented a sharp fall in the domestic unit.

Moreover, investors remained concerned over global trade uncertainties and the impact of the US visa fee hike on India's IT services exports.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 88.65 against the US dollar, and witnessed an intraday high of 88.60 and a low of 88.70 against the greenback.

The domestic unit finally settled for the day at 88.68

(provisional), registering a recovery of 7 paise over its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee ended 2 paise down at its lowest-ever closing level of 88.75 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to remain weak on recovery in the US Dollar and risk aversion in global markets amid geopolitical tensions between Russia and Ukraine," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

"US visa fee hike issue and rising crude oil prices may further pressure the rupee. However, the selling of Dollars by exporters may support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from the final Q2 GDP, weekly unemployment claims, and durable goods orders data from the US. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 88.40 to 89.10," Choudhary added. (PTI)

NTPC-NPCIL to invest ₹ 42,000 cr in 2,800 MW nuclear power project in Rajasthan

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: The 2,800 MW Mahi Banswara Rajasthan Atomic Power Project, developed by a NPCIL-NTPC joint venture at an investment of around ₹ 42,000 crore in Rajasthan, will be one of the largest nuclear plants in the country, supplying reliable base load energy, power major NTPC said on Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated the nuclear project along with other energy projects having a combined investment value of over ₹ 51,000 crore in Rajasthan. Modi laid the foundation stone of 4X700 MW Mahi Banswara Rajasthan Atomic Power Project (MBRAPP), which is being developed by joint venture entity Anushakti Vidhyut Nigam Ltd (ASHVINI). Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) owns 51 per cent stake and NTPC remaining 49 per cent in the JV. The partners will pool in financial, technological, and project expertise for the project which entails an investment of around ₹ 42,000 crore, NTPC said in a statement. The project, which marks NTPC's foray into nuclear power generation, will be one of the largest nuclear plants in the country supplying reliable base load energy and will strengthen India's position in the environmental stewardship and evolving nuclear energy landscape. (PTI)

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Contd. from Page 1...

Govt to order CBI

following proper legal processes," Sarma said.

He urged people to be patient, saying, "If anyone wants instant justice, we will fail in court, as it does not function on emotions but demands facts and evidence."

"It is, therefore, the SIT's responsibility to collect every piece of evidence that is required by court," Sarma said, urging people to cooperate with the investigations.

"We all love Zubeen equally, so let us allow the investigation to move forward in a steady, disciplined and transparent manner. We must remain alert and cautious against rumours and false information, as this will only divert the main issue of finding what exactly had happened," Sarma said.

The CM claimed that six years ago, he had publicly stated that Zubeen was an asset for the state, but certain people were using him for their personal gain or advantage.

"I had personally told Zubeen about it and also mentioned it in a few meetings. I have made several such statements on social media and several other occasions...I had raised concerns about those persons surrounding him who are now being questioned by the public," he added.

Sarma claimed that during the last Lok Sabha elections, Mahanta ran a social media campaign against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP.

"I have never spoken to him. He sent me numerous messages, but I never replied. Assam is a small state and one is bound to cross paths at some place or the other," he said.

"Let me make it clear, whether it is Rongali or the NEIF, Mahanta does not represent the true culture of Assam," Sarma said.

The Assam government has banned Mahanta and any organisation associated with him from holding any functions or festivals within the state.

The state government will not provide any financial grant, advertisement or sponsorship to any event with which he is associated, either directly or indirectly and will also request the central government not to extend any financial assistance or sponsorship to him in any manner. (PTI)

Counting of votes

he said. The BTC poll results are 'politically very significant for the BJP, but we sacrificed it due to the unfortunate death of Garg and the consequent preparations to bid him farewell. This was a real setback for us in the BTC polls," Sarma said.

Over 78 per cent of the electorate exercised their franchise in the council polls, of which 30 seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribe (ST) candidates, five for non-STs and the remaining five are open to both ST and non-ST candidates.

Alliance partners UPPL, BJP and the Gana Suraksha Party (GSP) headed the outgoing council.

In the last council polls held in December 2020, the UPPL had won 12 seats, BJP (9) and GSP (1), while the BPF, which had headed the council for the previous three terms, emerged as the single largest party with 17 seats, and the Congress secured one seat with its elected member later joining the BJP.

The BPF was then BJP's alliance partner in the state government, but the ruling party decided to join hands with the UPPL and the GSP to jointly form the council.

This is the second council poll after a fresh Bodo Accord was signed in New Delhi on January 27, 2020. (PTI)

BTC Election 2025

emerge as the single largest majority, securing a second consecutive term in power. "The common masses have voted in favour of UPPL. We are forming the BTC government again with majority seats," he said.

Ladakh violence: Uneasy

mob violence, Wangchuk said he is prepared to be arrested under the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA).

"They may be clever in making somebody else a scapegoat, but they are not wise. At this time, we all need wisdom rather than 'cleverness' because youths are already frustrated," Wangchuk said.

To prevent the escalation of unrest, strict prohibitory restrictions banning the assembly of five or more people were also placed in other major towns, including Kargil, where the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) had called a parallel shutdown.

Kargil District Magistrate Rakesh Kumar issued prohibitory orders under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, banning unauthorised processions and public statements likely to disturb peace.

Ladakh Lt Governor Kavinder Gupta chaired a high-level security review meeting, calling for heightened vigilance and inter-agency coordination, while terming the Wednesday's events "heart-wrenching" and a result of a "conspiracy".

The tragic events triggered sharp political reactions with Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, while appealing for peace in Ladakh, came out in strong defence of the Congress, saying the BJP was habitual for blaming others for their failures.

Speaking to reporters in Reasi district of Jammu region, the chief minister urged the LG-led administration of Ladakh to introspect on its "own failure" to maintain peace.

"The government in Ladakh is theirs (the BJP's). When they fail, they blame someone else. If the Congress is so powerful that it can cause riots in Ladakh, then why did they not form a council?" Abdullah said.

Opposition parties strongly condemned the violence in Ladakh and placed the blame squarely on the Central government for allegedly creating the circumstances that led to the unrest.

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti attributed the violent protests in Ladakh to the "wrong policies" of the Centre and argued that the unrest was an "outburst" resulting from a breach of public tolerance following six years of unfulfilled promises by the Union Home Ministry.

"What we saw yesterday was a breach in the barrier of their tolerance," Mehbooba told reporters.

Brushing aside BJP's claims that the Congress had instigated the violence, Mehbooba asserted, "It was a spontaneous reaction to apprehensions of losing their identity, land and jobs."

The CPI(M) criticised the "brutal repression" of the UT administration, which the party alleged caused the "tragic loss of four lives".

In a statement, the Left party alleged that the Union government was responsible for bringing about the situation that led to violence in a hitherto peaceful region.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav also blamed the BJP for the anger, claiming the party's "breach of promise" regarding granting statehood had caused public outrage.

"The BJP had assured the leaders, council members and representatives of Ladakh that statehood and powers would be restored. Profiteering is not the only form of corruption, breaking promises is also corruption," Yadav told reporters in Lucknow.

Veteran Congress leader Karan Singh expressed deep concern over the unrest, appealing to the Centre to "carefully consider" the demands of the agitating youth, including constitutional safeguards.

He described the demand for inclusion in the Sixth Schedule as an "eminently reasonable solution".

Meanwhile, the Union Home Ministry cancelled the FCRA licence of Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) founded by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk with "immediate effect", a government order said.

The action of the ministry was based on several alleged discrepancies detected in the accounts of the organisation including a fund transfer from Sweden which the ministry found was against "national interest".

The CBI has launched an inquiry into alleged violation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) against the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh (HIAL), an institution also founded by Wangchuk.

Wangchuk confirmed the inquiry, but maintained his institution does not seek foreign funds.

The LAB and KDA have been spearheading the agitation for statehood and Sixth Schedule extension for four years, with the next round of talks with the Centre scheduled for October 6. (PTI)

Police baton charge

the crowd for allegedly provoking the crowd gathered to create disturbances in the area, an official said. (PTI)

Assam Sahitya Sabha

people to pay their last respects at Sarusajai, and conducting the funeral with due honour. He expressed hope that the steps taken by the government to investigate the circumstances surrounding the singer's death would provide clarity and closure.

Modi spotlights 'time

Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). "In a changing world, the more a country depends on others, the more its growth remains compromised. Therefore, a country like India can no longer afford to depend on anyone... India must become self-reliant," he said.

He stressed that every product that can be made in India must be made in the country itself. (PTI)

GU to introduce four-year

programme will contribute to raising the overall quality of school education by creating professionally trained teachers with strong academic foundations.

The Department of Education is currently working on the curriculum design and infrastructure readiness to roll out the courses by 2026. University authorities have expressed confidence that the programme will draw aspiring teachers from across the Northeast, further enhancing GU's role as a hub of academic excellence.

CORRIGENDUM NO. 03 FOR TENDER NOTICE NO.: CON/2025/AUG/05, DATED: 18-08-2025

Corrigendum - 03 for Tender Notice No. CON/2025/AUG/05 has been issued against Tender No. CE-CON-DK-TN-2025-04. For details please visit website www.irps.gov.in.

Chief Engineer/Con-6, N.F. Railway, Maligaon, NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY, Serving Customers With A Smile

ENGINEERING WORKS

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. 41 of 2025, Date: 23-09-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Tender No.: DENGHY-56-2025, Name of work & Location:** RUB in lieu of Level Crossing near ART/New Guwahati. **Tender Value:** ₹5,99,88,466.73; **Earnest Money:** ₹4,50,000.00. **E-tenders will be closed at 13:00 hrs. on 15-10-2025 and will be opened at 13:00 hrs. on 15-10-2025.** For details please visit www.irps.gov.in. **Divisional Engineer/Guwahati, Maligaon, NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY, Serving Customers with a smile**

No. E - 383723/1102

NOTICE

In pursuance of the order of the Hon'ble Gauhati High Court passed in WP(C) 3749/2025 Rupam Roy & Ors -Vs- State of Assam regarding the validity of 18-Month Diploma in Elementary Education, Assam (D.El.Ed.) from National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and in continuation to this office Advertisement-A vide No. E-383723/117 dated 26/12/2023 and Advertisement-B vide No. E-383723/124 dated 26/12/2023, this is for information of all the candidates who have submitted their documents of D.El.Ed. from NIOS, that they need to submit the UDISE code as well as the name of the working school as on 10/08/2017.

The concerned candidates should visit the official website of DEE, Assam at <https://dee.assam.gov.in/portlets/recruitment> and submit the required information from the **Midnight of 25/09/2025 to Midnight of 26/09/2025, without fail.**

Sd/-

Director, Elementary Education, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

DIPR /D/ HLT/185/26-Sep-25

Kaushik Rai thanks CM for visionary, people-centric governance as Cachar celebrates scooter distribution under ASRLM

Sakhi Express to accelerate rural empowerment in Barak Valley

HT Correspondent

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: "The Sakhi Express will not only accelerate rural empowerment but also bring the government closer to the last mile," stated Minister for Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, Mines and Minerals, and Barak Valley Development, Kaushik Rai, while delivering his keynote address at the grand distribution ceremony of scooters under the Sakhi Express Scheme at Udiyaman Mahila CMTC, near Itkholā Bazar, on Thursday.

In his elaborate address, the Minister expressed heartfelt gratitude to CM Himanta Biswa Sarma for his visionary and people-centric leadership.

Calling the initiative a noteworthy milestone in grassroots empowerment, Minister Rai emphasised, "This step will enable self-help groups and women entrepreneurs to become financially self-reliant and socially stronger. I firmly believe that this initiative will not only improve connect-



ivity but also strengthen rural institutions by ensuring that timely assistance reaches even the remotest households." He urged the beneficiaries to use the scooters as "vehicles of empowerment, service, and responsibility," dedicated to the upliftment of rural families.

Meanwhile, speaking at the

event, Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty described the scheme as a historic milestone in women's empowerment and rural development. He stated that cadres have already emerged as trusted partners of SHG members and rural households, and with the scooters, their reach and effectiveness would expand further.

Cachar District Commissioner Mridul Yadav, IAS, meanwhile, praised the relentless commitment of ASRLM cadres and highlighted the district's achievement of maintaining one of the lowest NPA rates in SHG loans across Assam.

While delivering his speech, Kankan Narayan Sikdar, President of Cachar Zilla Parishad, urged the cadres to carry forward their mission with the spirit of "Sakhi Bhavana," extending every possible support to rural families.

Earlier, Pranab Kumar Bora, ACS, CEO of Cachar Zilla Parishad, welcomed the gathering and described the Sakhi Express as a transformative step in bridging rural-urban gaps.

The event witnessed the distribution of scooters to 367 Community Cadres representing various blocks of Cachar district. Beneficiaries, receiving the vehicles with visible joy, expressed that the support would ease their travel challenges and inspire them to serve their communities with greater efficiency and dedication.

AUWJ pays tribute to Zubeen Garg

HT Bureau

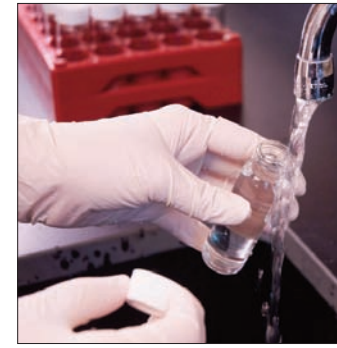
GUWAHATI, Sept 25: The Assam Union of Working Journalists (AUWJ) paid floral tributes to cultural icon and legendary singer Zubeen Garg at the Asom Sahitya Sabha office premises in Guwahati on Wednesday. The ceremony began with senior journalist Kailash Chowdhury lighting a lantern and reciting a poem in Garg's memory. AUWJ presidents Madhusudan Medhi and Pradeep Barman, along with secretary Mukut Raj Sarma, offered wreaths at Garg's portrait.

In respect to the singer, AUWJ announced that the closing ceremony of its Golden Jubilee celebrations, earlier scheduled for October 25-26, has been postponed to December 6-7. The association also fixed October 20 as the deadline for membership renewals and decided to hold its organisational elections in January next year.

The event saw the presence of senior journalists, literary workers, and AUWJ office bearers including Hemant Barman, Kishor Jyoti Sharma, Tarani Charan Kalita, Bhaskar Sarma, Prasanta Modak, and Sonadhar Deka.

Cachar administration makes water quality tests mandatory for hotels, restaurants

Monthly testing and strict compliance measures aimed at ensuring safe drinking water for citizens across the district



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: In a decisive move to strengthen public health safety and ensure access to safe drinking water across Cachar, the district administration has directed all hotels, restaurants, and similar establishments to mandatorily conduct monthly water quality tests. The order, issued by Additional District Commissioner Antara Sen, ACS, came into immediate effect on Wednesday and underscores the administration's firm commitment to safeguarding consumers against potential health hazards.

As per the directive, every establishment providing drinking water to guests and the public will now be required to get their water samples tested for essential physical, chemical, and microbiological parameters in line with Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) norms. The tests must be carried out through the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) or other laboratories recognised by it. The administration has further stipulated that reports of these tests be

submitted to the designated authority including the District Health Officer, Silchar Municipal Corporation, or the concerned licensing body by the 10th of every subsequent month.

The Cachar PHED has also been tasked with facilitating timely testing services and maintaining a centralized database of all reports. Officials said this measure will not only help detect potential contaminants but also ensure a transparent record of compliance across commercial establishments.

Significantly, the order carries a strong warning against violations. Non-compliance will attract legal action under the Public Health Act, the Food Safety and Standards Act, and other applicable laws. Authorities said the step is preventive in nature and aligns with ongoing efforts of the Cachar administration to improve the district's health infrastructure and promote a safe living environment for residents.

Meanwhile, the directive has been widely welcomed by citizens, with many hailing it as a proactive step by the administration to check water-borne diseases and improve accountability in public-facing establishments. By making water quality monitoring a monthly practice, the district administration has sought to instill both responsibility and transparency among hoteliers and restaurant owners while reinforcing its commitment to public health and safety.

This is stated in a press release issued from Regional office of Information & Public Relations Barak valley Zone Silchar Assam.

Oral Health Program

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 25: An Oral Health Program was conducted at Diphu Medical College & Hospital on Wednesday last as part of the ongoing Sewa Saptah and Seva Parv. The event was jointly organised by the Assam Government and the National Health Mission (NHM).

Outpatient Department (OPD) patients took part in the program, receiving awareness sessions and dental check-ups from medical experts. The initiative underscored the government's focus on strengthening preventive healthcare and reaching communities at the grassroots.

Diphu Medical College, through this program, reaffirmed its role in delivering quality healthcare and raising health awareness among the people of Karbi Anglong.

Diamond Jubilee of HCDG College

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Sept 25: The closing ceremony of the diamond jubilee year event of HCDG College Nitaipukhuri was to be held on September 20, September 21, and September 22, 2025, but due to the sudden demise of the heartthrob Zubeen Garg on September 19, the closing ceremony was postponed to September 26 and September 27, 2025.

ABSU submits memorandum to CM on Zubeen Garg

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 25: The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) demanded for CBI enquiry into the untimely death of heartthrob Zubeen Garg to identify the involved persons into the incident.

The students union submitted a memorandum to the chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma through the district commissioner that demanded CBI enquiry into the untimely demise of Zubeen Garg in Singapore recently.

"With deep sorrow and anguish, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), on behalf of the Bodo community and the people of Assam places before you this earnest appeal regarding the tragic and untimely demise of our beloved singer, music director, composer, and cultural icon Zubeen Garg. His sudden and mysterious death has left an irreparable void not only in the field of Assamese and Bodo music but also in the hearts of millions who cherished his voice, artistry, and humanitarian spirit", the students union said.

The students union has firmly believe that the circumstances surrounding his death demand an impartial, transparent, and high-level enquiry. Therefore, we strongly urge the Government of Assam to hand over the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) so that truth is revealed, justice is ensured, and the guilty are brought to book with the most stringent punishment.



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GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
DIRECTORATE OF TRAINING
ASSAM ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF COLLEGE
AN INSTITUTE CERTIFIED UNDER THE STANDARDS OF ISO 9001:2015
JAWAHARNAGAR, KHANAPARA; GUWAHATI - 22
PHONE NO. 0361-236325, eMail: director@aac.gov.in

ECF No. 650816/148

Notice

Application are invited from the aspirants of Civil Services Examination 2026 (CSE) conducted by UPSC for admission into Class Room Coaching for Civil Services Examination (CSE) at Assam Administrative Staff College, Khanapara, Guwahati-22. The last date for submission of application form is 22nd October, 2025 up to 5:00 PM. Application form and detailed notice with guidelines and instruction to applicants may be download from official website of Assam Administrative Staff College (aac.assam.gov.in).

Sd/-
Joint Director of Training
Assam Administrative Staff College
Khanapara, Guwahati-781022

DIPR /D/HLT/184/26-Sep-25

Ashirbad Group and the 3rd International Trade Fair

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 25: Ashirbad Group, Guwahati is back again in Diphu town to host the 3rd International Trade Fair at Diphu Club. The trade fair which was supposed to start from September 19 has to be delayed due to the demise of Assam icon Zubeen Garg, who was cremated on Tuesday last.

On 24 September the Diphu Club president, Robin Goswami inaugurated the trade fair in presence of Diphu Club vice president, Toroni Rongpi and treasurer Satyajit Mishra and Ashirbad members Ravi Shankar, Ananta Das and Pritom Dutta.

The inauguration programme started with the lighting of a candle in front of the portrait of late Zubeen Garg to remember his legacy and a tribute led by Diphu Club president, Goswami. It was followed with the lighting of the inaugural lamp and cutting of the ribbon by Goswami.

Goswami during the inauguration said the Ashirbad group has been a regular visitor in town, hosting the International Trade Fair to showcase the various products ranging from home appliances to footwear, door and floor mate, sofa, herbal medicines, ornaments, blankets and many more.

One of the members of Shirbad, Ravi Shankar said the Shirbad Group is Guwahati based that moves around the Northeastern region organising the International Trade Fair.

"Diphu is not a new place for us as we have



been organising the International Trade Fair regularly every year. We invite people to come and witness the trade fair during free time, as we bring to you different valuable items at attractive prices," Ravi Shankar said.

He informed me that there are 45 stalls. This time the organiser has brought with them Adivasi hair and massage oil from Karnataka, which is ayurvedic for relief of headache, body pain and to free blocked nose.

Other stalls include durable plastic items from Siliguri, west Bengal, handloom products

from Haryana handloom, book stall from Delhi, Punjabi sandals and suit, Household items from Delhi, Home appliance from Guwahati, Kashmiri shawls, Rajasthan achar, Assam Prakritik Udyog, Tihu, Nalbari selling on ayurvedic medicines, ladies foot wear from Ludhiana, Punjab, Assam sari from Jorhat Assam, Manipur ornaments, door and floor mates from Uttar Pradesh, sofa sets from Royal Wood Furniture, Guwahati, Rajasthan pickles, Haryana Panipat dealing in bed sets, blankets, table cloths and many more.

Ashes of icon Zubeen Garg immerses in Kolong, Brahmaputra

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 25: The people of Nagaon district came together to pay their final respects to the legendary singer Zubeen Garg, whose ashes of his mortal remains were immersed in the Brahmaputra river and Kolong river with full state honors on Thursday.

The last rites of the iconic singer, who was known for his soulful voice and contribution to the music industry, were performed on September 23, at Sonapur with full state honors. Following this, the ashes were collected and brought to Nehrubali in Nagaon on Wednesday last, where a grand tribute was organised.

The event saw an overwhelming turnout of over 30,000 fans, who gathered to pay their respects to the singer. During the evening program, the atten-

dees collectively sang Zubeen Garg's evergreen song "Mayabini Ratir Bukut", which has become an anthem for many.

The ashes were later divided into two parts. One part was immersed in the Kolong River in the presence of local MLA Rupak Sarma, District Commissioner Debashish Sarma, and Superintendent of Police Swapnil Deka, among others. The other part was immersed in the Brahmaputra River at Gatikara Muwamari near Dhing, as per the singer's wishes. To honor the singer's memory, a sapling of Nahor tree was planted at Nehrubali and at a under-construction park in front of Nowgong Girls' College. The event was attended by local dignitaries, officials, and fans, who came together to bid a final farewell to the beloved singer.

District level awareness programme for fisheries sector

HT Correspondent

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) Regional Office Guwahati along with Department of Fisheries, Govt of India, jointly organised a one-day district level awareness programme on "Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)/ Fisheries & Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) scheme/ LINAC-NCDC Fisheries Business Incubation Center (LIFIC) at Jyoti Sanskritik Bhaban, Abhayapuri, Bongaigaon district on Wednesday last.

Fishery Department, Govt of Assam & Cooperation Dept, Govt of Assam actively assisted in organising the awareness programme successfully. The programme was attended by Bapon Kalita, DFDO Bongaigaon District, Harunal Rashid, SDO Fishery, Abhayapuri, Hitesh Kewalramani, Asst. Director NCDC Regional Office, Guwahati, Nilangana Kalita, FDO Bongaigaon, Bibash Mahanta, SRCS North Salmara, Hemant Deka, Sr. Inspector, North Salmara, Phatick Ahmed, Progressive Fish Farmer, Barpeta and Guru Ram Das, Ex. Anchalik Panchayat Member. Others Officials from NCDC Regional Office Guwahati, viz Kaushik Manna and Sarbasta Ghosh also participated in the programme. The beneficiary members include various members from Primary Fisheries societies, FFPO cooperatives, Individual fishermen, fisheries experts and prospective fish farmers from the region as well officials and employees of Fisheries and Cooperation department from the district.

Warning against illegal collection of fees

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 25: Zunheboto deputy commissioner Dharam Raj on Thursday issued a strong warning against the rampant and unauthorised collection of money on the pretext of student registration fees from non-indigenous inhabitants in Zunheboto town.

In an official notice, the DC stated that such practices by individuals or organisations are illegal and constitute a punishable offence.

He cautioned that strict action will be taken against any individual or organisation found engaging in such unlawful activities.

The DC further clarified that the verification of inner line permit (ILP) will be strictly carried out only by the district administration or other authorised government agencies.

Dr Hemen Sarma and Prof Sanjay Basumatary in Stanford-Elsevier world's top 2% scientists list

Professors of Bodoland University get global recognition

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 25: Bodoland University has achieved a proud milestone as two of its faculty members have been recognised in the prestigious Stanford-Elsevier World's Top 2% Scientists List 2025, a global database that highlights the most influential researchers across disciplines.

The Stanford-Elsevier list, compiled annually by Stanford University in collaboration with Elsevier, ranks scientists worldwide based on standardized citation indicators. These indicators measure research performance across both career-long and single-year contributions, covering 22 fields and 174 subfields. The metrics include citations, h-index, and co-authorship-adjusted indices, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of scientific impact.

This year's report features 6,239 Indian researchers in the single-year citation impact category and 3,372 in

the career-long category, underscoring India's rising influence in global research. The inclusion of Bodoland University professors in this prestigious list reflects the growing academic and research excellence emerging from the region.

From Bodoland University, Dr Hemen Sarma, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Botany, has been listed in both the career-long and single-year categories. He holds a global rank of 41,711 in 2025 and has featured in the single-year list for three consecutive years (2023, 2024, and 2025) under the field of Earth & Environmental Sciences (Environmental Sciences sub-field). His research spans nanomaterials, environmental pollution mitigation, and phytoremediation, earning wide international recognition.

Prof Sanjay Basumatary, Head of the Department of Chemistry, has



[Dr. Hemen Sarma]



[Prof. Sanjay Basumatary]

been recognised in the single-year category for his impactful contributions in Energy, General Chemistry, and Enabling & Strategic Technologies. His current global rank is 96,146, a position he has consistently

maintained for two consecutive years (2024 and 2025). His work focuses on sustainable energy, catalysis, and advanced materials, placing him among the most-cited Indian researchers in his field. Under the visionary leader-

ship of Vice-Chancellor, Prof B L Ahuja and Registrar, Dr Subung Basumatary, Bodoland University has significantly strengthened its research environment, creating new opportunities for innovation and excellence. This achievement is particularly significant as it showcases the emergence of world-class research from Assam's 6th Schedule area, an educationally and socio-culturally important region of the Assam and Northeast India.

Prof Ahuja and Dr Basumatary congratulated the two faculty members, noting that their recognition on the global stage brings pride not only to Bodoland University but also to the entire Bodoland region. They emphasised that such accomplishments highlight the university's growing visibility in the international scientific community and will inspire young scholars to pursue impactful research of global relevance.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If you could say it in words there would be no reason to paint. — Edward Hopper

Poll politics in Bihar

As Bihar is nearing close to the publication of final Electoral Roll after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) on September 30, 2025, the politics in the state is being sensationalised by the BJP on the issue of women's pride and Muslim infiltration issues, while the Opposition INDIA bloc is trying to sensitize the disadvantaged classes of people, including OBCs, Dalits, and minorities. Additionally, CM Nitish Kumar is being marginalised by the BJP in NDA alliance. BJP has signalled that PM Narendra Modi will be mascot of the NDA during election campaign, not CM Nitish Kumar, though is their CM face. The election to the Bihar Legislative Assembly is to be held in October-November 2025, and election dates would be announced by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in the forthcoming weeks. The opposition has alleged that ECI has conspired with PM Narendra Modi and his BJP to conduct SIR for Bihar with the intention to de-enfranchise large number of voters who had not the 11 documents it has asked for. Later Supreme Court of India had to give direction to the ECI that Aadhaar should be considered as identity proof for the voter and their name be included in the voter list. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a bid to sensationalize and polarize the Bihar politics by repeatedly emphasizing that the Muslim infiltrators from Bangladesh will have to leave Bihar.

INDIA bloc has recently concluded their fortnight long "Vote Adhikar Rally" in the state that has attracted good response from the people. Nevertheless, the INDIA bloc will have very hard times in the coming weeks on account of the counter strategy of the BJP. It has clearly given the signal to everyone, both in the NDA and in the Opposition camp, that election in Bihar will be contested in the name of PM Narendra Modi. It is just like election campaign. On September 16, 2025, the state BJP dispatched 243 vans to the Assembly constituencies from the capital city Patna's Gandhi Maidan. BJP State president Dilip Kumar Jaiswal, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, Bihar in-charge Vinod Tawde, Health Minister Mangal Pandey and Union Minister Nityanand Rai flagged off the vans.

BJP's state president Jaiswal said while flagging off the vans that "These chariots will work to spread the message of service and dedication through the film 'Chalo Jeete Hain', based on the inspirational childhood of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in all the Assembly constituencies, so that every citizen can take inspiration from his life full of service, struggle and determination." INDIA bloc, after the conclusion of their "Vote Adhikar Yatra", has been planning a comprehensive strategy to take on the BJP. The strategy will not only include the more joint public rallies but also early seat sharing arrangement among them.

Durga: The Eternal Flame of Shakti

In the vast tapestry of Hindu thought, the feminine divine occupies a position of extraordinary significance. The pantheon of Hinduism is rich with goddesses who symbolize not only the cosmic order but also the most intimate qualities of human experience. Among them are Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity; Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and knowledge; Kali, the fierce destroyer of evil forces; Amba, the universal mother; and Durga, the embodiment of power, courage, and divine protection. Each figure reflects a dimension of existence, and together they form the sacred balance between creation and destruction, material abundance and spiritual wisdom.

Durga, in particular, has become a symbol that transcends religious devotion and enters the very fabric of cultural identity. She is not merely a goddess to be worshipped during festivals; she represents the eternal force of Shakti, the feminine principle of energy and dynamism that animates the universe. Unlike Lakshmi or Saraswati, whose imagery is usually serene and nurturing, Durga embodies a paradox: a virgin who is addressed as Mother, a smiling queen seated upon a snarling lion, a compassionate protector who also wields weapons of immense destructive potential. She is one of the Shiva Shaktis, drawing her power directly from the incorporeal Shiva, the Supreme Being.

The iconography of Durga is a carefully constructed allegory of spiritual and worldly power. Her visage is calm, graceful, and maternal, yet she sits astride a lion that represents raw, untamed nature. The lion's ferocity highlights her authority over the wild forces of the material world. She is adorned like a queen, emphasizing her sovereignty, yet her power is not bound to temporal politics alone. Her arms, extending in multiplicity, hold both divine symbols and lethal weapons. Four of her hands carry emblems associated with Vishnu—the chakra (disc), conch (shell), lotus, and mace—while the others bear the sword, trident, and bow, alongside a hand raised in blessing. These items are not mere ornaments; each is a metaphor for inner capacities of the human spirit when aligned with divine consciousness.

Durga's eight arms represent the manifold spiritual powers required to conquer evil. These include tolerance, discernment, judgment, cooperation, courage, introspection, and the ability to process details. Each weapon or symbol she holds is linked to these capacities. The sword, for example, is the emblem of razor-sharp intellect, capable of cutting through confusion and illusion, distinguishing truth from falsehood. This is not the sword of violence but of clarity, severing the tangled roots of ignorance. The chakra, a spinning disc of light balanced on her index finger, represents the enlightened intellect that maintains stability and balance even in constant motion. It also symbolizes the destruction of negative thoughts at their very source, reminding the devotee that mastery over the mind is the foundation of freedom. The trident, or trishula, is a particularly profound symbol. Its three prongs represent three eternal truths: soul-consciousness, God-consciousness, and the merging of all elements of change in the material world into a singular cycle of transformation. This triadic concept echoes beyond Hinduism, resonating with Jain philosophy and even with Confucian ideas expressed in the Chinese I Ching, The Book of Changes. In all cases, the trident reflects the human quest to find order in flux, to unify the constant shifts of existence into an enduring spiritual reality.



The mace or club carried by Durga represents the power to silence negativity in an instant. Unlike physical might, this is the inner strength born of meditation and yoga, the capacity to stop destructive thoughts before they manifest in words or actions. The conch shell, when blown, resounds with an auspicious vibration. It represents the sanctity of the spoken and written word, affirming that when words emerge from a mind of peace, they become truth itself. The bow in her hand extends this idea further. Words, like arrows, can pierce deeply; yet they strike true only when released from the ego-free state of humility. In the epic Ramayana, it was only after Lord Rama worshipped Durga for nine nights during Navaratri that she bestowed upon him her bow. Empowered by it, Rama defeated Ravana, the ten-headed demon king. Ravana's ten heads symbolize not physical multiplicity but ten vices—five overtly masculine: ego, greed, lust, anger, and attachment; and five covertly feminine: hatred, slander, fear, jealousy, and laziness. In this myth, Durga's empowerment signifies the realization that only through spiritual humility and divine assistance can humanity overcome these layered evils.

The lotus flower, another of Durga's emblems, symbolizes detachment. Just as a lotus blooms untouched by the muddy waters from which it rises, so too should a person live in the world without being sullied by its temptations and illusions. The lotus thus embodies the principle of acting selflessly, as an instrument of the divine, without arrogance or the expectation of reward. This is a recurring theme across Indic traditions, particularly in the Bhagavad Gita, where Krishna instructs Arjuna to perform his duty without attachment to outcomes. Saraswati too is often portrayed seated upon a lotus, and yogis adopt the lotus pose (padmasana) to cultivate detachment in meditation.

Durga's raised hand, inscribed with the sacred syllable Om, signifies blessing and assurance. Om itself, meaning "I am, I exist," underscores the centrality of self-awareness. The goddess does not hoard her powers but shares them with her devotees, guiding them toward self-realization. She is both the source and the channel, a figure who embodies power but also extends it outward for the welfare of the world. Her very seat—the lion—is itself an allegory. Lions are fierce, unpredictable, and capable of immense destruction, representing the violent energies of nature and the fears that grip human life. Yet under Durga's command, the lion becomes her vehicle, demonstrating that only the divine feminine can master and redirect destructive energy into pro-

ductive strength. She, the virgin mother, transforms the lion's ferocity into an instrument of balance. Thus, Durga's triumph is not merely over external demons but over the forces of chaos within existence itself.

The broader significance of goddess worship in Hinduism lies in its affirmation of the feminine as the seat of spiritual power. While patriarchal social structures have historically diminished the status of mortal women, the goddesses remain unchallenged as supreme deities in the minds of devotees. Their influence has not been diminished by intellectual or social forces; rather, it has endured precisely because they offer a spiritual connection to the Supreme Being that is accessible to all. The goddess becomes a mediator between the transcendent and the immanent, between the incorporeal God and the material world.

Durga's role as a virgin mother invites comparisons with figures in other traditions. Roman Catholics venerate the Virgin Mary, who, like Durga, represents purity, motherhood, and divine intercession. In East Asia, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, Quan Yin, fulfills a similar role as a compassionate savior who alleviates suffering. These parallels suggest that across cultures, humanity has instinctively turned to the feminine archetype as the ultimate expression of mercy, strength, and resilience.

The festival of Durga Puja, celebrated most prominently in Bengal and Assam, is not only a religious ritual but also a cultural phenomenon. For nine nights and ten days, devotees honor her with prayers, music, and elaborate artistic installations. This celebration, known as Navaratri in many parts of India, mirrors the myth of Rama's worship before his victory over Ravana. But beyond myth, the festival reinforces the social ideal of feminine power as central to the balance of life. It is a time when the goddess descends to dwell among her devotees, reminding them of their capacity to confront evil and restore harmony.

The enduring image of Durga—smiling, benevolent, yet armed and commanding—remains a profound reminder of humanity's need for balance between gentleness and strength. She is the destroyer of vice and the nurturer of virtue, the fierce protector and the compassionate mother. In her lies the synthesis of opposites: virgin and mother, serene and wrathful, earthly queen and cosmic power.

The relevance of Durga extends far beyond religious devotion. In a modern world fraught with conflict, inequality, and ecological destruction, her imagery serves as a metaphor for the strength required to face crises. Just as Durga commands the lion, so must humanity learn to harness the forces of nature without succumbing to them. Just as she conquers vices, so too must society recognize and overcome its collective greed, anger, and fear. Her spiritual powers—tolerance, courage, discernment, and cooperation—are not relics of mythology but necessary virtues for building a just and harmonious world.

Thus, Durga endures not merely as a goddess enshrined in temples but as an eternal principle of divine power, compassion, and balance. She is the reminder that strength need not be divorced from gentleness, that destruction may serve the purpose of renewal, and that the feminine principle is indispensable in sustaining civilization. In every smile, every weapon, every symbol she bears, she teaches that true power lies not in domination but in the capacity to destroy evil and extend blessings in equal measure. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

POST BAG

Save Bharalu river

Sir/Ma'am

The Bharalu River, once the pride of Guwahati, is today reduced to a polluted drain. Years of neglect, unchecked dumping of garbage, and release of untreated sewage have turned this river into a source of disease and urban flooding rather than life.

The plight of Bharalu reflects our disregard for nature. If immediate steps are not taken, this river will soon vanish from our city's landscape. The authorities must install proper sewage treatment plants, regulate waste disposal, and initiate large-scale cleaning operations. At the same time, citizens should actively participate by avoiding littering and adopting eco-friendly habits.

Saving Bharalu is not just an environmental concern but also a necessity for public health and the future of Guwahati. Let us join hands and revive this river before it is too late.

Yours etc.,
Arhee Barthakur
Lachit Lane, Rajgarh Road

The history-maker himself has today become history

Sir/Ma'am

When a person's name becomes an identity, an emotion, a festival, the very symbol of a State, then the importance and necessity of that person for a society or a state hardly needs to be explained. That very special person who won a place in the hearts of people of all ages is none other than the pride, the emotion, and the self-respect of the Assamese nation — Zubeen Garg.

On 18 November 1972, in Jorhat district, was born this jewel of the Assamese Community — a singer, lyricist, composer, actor, music director and artist in the truest sense. From birth itself, Zubeen Garg seemed destined to carry an extraordinary personality.

He was someone who could share others' pain, rejoice in others' happiness, and always extend his helping hand openly to anyone in distress. These qualities made Zubeen Garg stand apart from the rest.

Because of his outspoken nature, he often found himself in the middle of controversies, yet he never hesitated to speak the truth. His candidness opened up a new direction in Assam's political and social life. In political, economic, and social matters of Assam, Zubeen Garg was always alert and conscious, raising his voice for the people whenever needed. His unique lifestyle made him not only a figure of pride in Assam but also a distinct personality across the country.

With the innocence of a child's heart, Zubeen Garg had the indomitable courage and passion to stand at the forefront of every crisis of the Assamese people, leading them from the front. Every Assamese will forever remember that spirit. No one could have imagined that such a

patriotic, selfless soul who always thought for the welfare of others would silently leave the nation in tears like this.

A great Assamese who created history has today himself become history. In the land where the sun rises, today it feels as though the sun of music has set. An invaluable treasure of Assam, a shining jewel of India, has departed in a way no one could have ever imagined — walking a path of no return on foreign soil.

Had it been in Assam, not abroad, the Assamese nation would never have let Zubeen Garg slip away. Even by giving their own breath, the people of Assam would have brought him back to life — this, every true-hearted person knows. Perhaps it was only in the absence of his loved ones that destiny seized the chance to take Zubeen Garg away.

Maybe the sea itself did not understand the value of Zubeen Garg's life and his deep personality. Since only in the depth of the sea are priceless pearls and gems found, perhaps, being more valuable than pearls and gems themselves, Zubeen Garg chose to rest in eternal sleep in the sea's depth.

If it had been the Brahmaputra, it would surely have returned Zubeen Garg to the heart of the Assamese people.

Zubeen Garg gave much to the Assamese community, the nation too received much from him. But more importantly, there was still so much more that Assam, Assamese cinema, and Assamese music were yet to receive. Many of his dreams and plans for Assamese music and cinema remain unfinished.

The loss of Zubeen Garg is a wound that the Assamese nation can never heal. For Assamese people, Assamese cinema, and Assamese music, there will never again rise a sun by the name of Zubeen Garg.

Deborshi Gautam
Vill - Bongaon
District - Nalbari (Assam)

Take Care Mama!

Sir/Ma'am

We are all witnessing the tireless dedication of our Hon'ble Chief Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. His commitment to the state, his continuous meetings, and his untiring presence at every corner of Assam inspire us deeply. But at the same time, we cannot ignore the truth—that our beloved Chief Minister looks tired, worn and unwell.

We, the people of Assam, care for him not just as our leader but as one of our own. His dreams, his vision, and his determined plans for a stronger and more prosperous Assam are treasures for us. For those dreams to become reality, he must also take care of his own health. He can assign some of his works to his ministers who barring a few are inactive.

I urge our Chief Minister to give a little time for rest, to take care of his health, because the people of Assam need him strong, smiling, and leading us for years to come.

Yours etc.,
Noopur Baruah,
Tezpur

Celebrating World Tourism Day: 27th September

By: Diganta Barooah

World Tourism Day is celebrated globally on September 27 each year. This annual observance aims to promote tourism worldwide, highlighting its significance and encouraging its development. The day fosters an appreciation for the joys of exploring new destinations and experiencing diverse cultures, emphasizing the important role tourism plays in cultural exchange, economic growth, and global understanding. World Tourism Day 2025 highlights tourism's transformative potential as an agent of positive change. Realizing this potential, however, demands more than growth alone. It requires good governance, strategic planning, robust monitoring and clear priority setting that align with long-term sustainability goals. Tourism is more than an economic sector, it is a catalyst for social progress, delivering education, employment and creating new opportunities for all. To unlock these benefits, a deliberate and inclusive approach is essential, one that places sustainability, resilience and social equity at the core of tourism development and decision-making. The World Tourism Day 2025 theme is "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation", as announced by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). It emphasizes shaping tourism as a force for positive social, economic, and environmental change. It promotes innovation and inclusive practices to ensure that tourism benefits people, communities, and the planet sustainably.

Key Aspects of the World Tourism Day 2025 Theme :

*** Sustainability :**
The theme reinforces the ongoing global push for more environmentally and socially responsible tourism practices.

*** Transformation :**
It signals a need for a fundamental shift in how tourism operates, emphasizing innovation and a forward-thinking approach.

*** Call to Action :**
The theme serves as a call for all stakeholders in the tourism industry—governments, businesses, and tourists—to work together to achieve these transformations.

History of World Tourism Day :

* World Tourism Day was established to recognize the importance of tourism in fostering global understanding, economic growth, and sustainable development. * The initiative aimed to promote sustainable development, including poverty eradication, by supporting sustainable tourism as a key driver for global progress. * The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) established World Tourism Day during a meeting in Spain. * The first celebration took place in 1980. September 27 was chosen to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the UNWTO Statutes on September 27, 1970. * In 2015, during its 70th session, the United Nations General Assembly designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (resolution

A/RES/70/193).

Significance of World Tourism Day:
Tourism is a vital global economic sector that not only drives growth and employment but also fosters cultural exchange, sustainable development, and environmental conservation.

*** Economic Impact and significance :**
Employs 1 in 10 people worldwide and contributes over 20% of GDP in some countries.

*** Cultural Exchange and significance :**
Enables people to explore diverse cultural and natural wonders, fostering global connections and shared understanding.

*** Sustainable Development and significance :**
Aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDGs 8 (decent work and economic growth), 12 (responsible consumption), and 14 (life below water).

*** Employment Opportunities and significance :**
Provides jobs for women, youth, migrant workers, and rural populations, with nearly half of the workforce under 25.

*** Biodiversity and Conservation and significance :**

Supports biodiversity protection and conservation efforts in many regions worldwide, linking tourism with environmental stewardship. As on September 27, 2025, the world celebrates World Tourism Day, an annual occasion dedicated to promoting tourism globally, this day highlights tourism's role in fostering cultural exchange, economic growth, and international understanding, while encouraging exploration and appreciation of diverse communities. * It inspires individuals and organizations to support the growth of tourism while preserving local cultures and the environment. * It recognizes the importance of tourism in driving economic development and employment worldwide. * It highlights tourism's role in promoting cultural exchange and global understanding. * It encourages responsible and sustainable travel practices for the benefit of people and the planet. * It emphasizes tourism as a tool for social and economic transformation, especially in developing regions.

António Guterres, The Secretary-General of The United Nations' Message For World Tourism Day :

* Tourism is a powerful driver of transformation.

It creates jobs, fuels local economies, supports infrastructure and contributes to development far beyond GDP.

Tourism strengthens bonds between people and places. It builds bridges across cultures, preserves traditions and restores cultural heritage. It reminds us of our shared humanity — and the richness of diversity.

Yet tourism can also damage the very places and communities it celebrates.

As the world faces climate breakdown and rising inequalities, we need bold, urgent, and

sustainable action that puts people and planet first. This year's theme — "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation" — calls us to action.

That means investing in education and skills, especially for women, youth, and marginalized communities; supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; and advancing climate action by reducing emissions across the tourism sector, conserving biodiversity, and protecting fragile ecosystems.

Today, and every day, let's harness the power of tourism as a force for transformation, resilience, sustainability, and shared progress for all.

Reasons For Celebrating World Tourism Day:

* Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. * Modern tourism is closely linked to development and encompasses a growing number of new destinations. These dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socioeconomic progress. * Today, the business volume of tourism equals or even surpasses that of oil exports, food products or automobiles. * Tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce, and represents at the same time one of the main income sources for many developing countries. This growth goes hand in hand with an increasing diversification and competition among destinations. * This global spread of tourism in industrialised and developed states has produced economic and employment benefits in many related sectors - from construction to agriculture or telecommunications. * The contribution of tourism to economic well-being depends on the quality and the revenues that the tourism offer. * UN Tourism assists destinations in their sustainable positioning in ever more complex national and international markets. * As the UN agency dedicated to tourism, UN Tourism points out that particularly developing countries stand to benefit from sustainable tourism and acts to help make this a reality.

Conclusion :

As global tourism rebounds post-pandemic, the industry has a unique opportunity to reset with sustainability at its core. The World Tourism Day 2025 theme will likely call for innovation, inclusivity, and environmental stewardship. By incorporating sustainable tourism activities and promoting eco-friendly Tourism Day events, communities and businesses can ensure tourism benefits everyone—travelers, locals, and the planet. World Tourism Day isn't just about celebrating travel—it's about shaping its future. From cultural preservation to environmental responsibility, the day reminds us of tourism's power to transform economies, unite people, and protect the planet. By embracing the World Tourism Day 2025 theme, hosting meaningful World Tourism Day celebrations, and committing to eco-friendly initiatives, we can make travel a positive force for generations to come.

US military presence in Bangladesh worries India

By: Saleem Samad

In 1996, Bangladesh agreed to the “war on terror” against the rogue Jihadist regime in Afghanistan, officially the Global War on Terrorism, a global military campaign initiated by the United States following the 11 September attacks in 2001, and is one of the most recent global conflicts spanning multiple wars.

The US military arrived for three joint military exercises with its counterpart, the Bangladesh military. The US officers checked into a Bangladesh Army-affiliated Radisson Blu Hotel in Chattogram (formerly Chittagong) on September 10 for an exercise in the coastal region of the south.

For the fourth year in a row, the Bangladesh Army and US Army Pacific conducted Exercise Tiger Lightning for preparedness on counterterrorism, peacekeeping, jungle operations, medical evacuations, and countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs), says the US Embassy in Dhaka on 20 July.

Since 2009, the ongoing exercise will feature patrol boat handling and small arms marksmanship, strengthening warfare diving and salvage, as well as the para-commandos’ ability to respond to crises.

In the hallmarks of defense relationship between the two countries, the US built C-130 fleets that are critical in disaster response, airdrops, and air mobility operations. The exercise included Search and Rescue (SAR) and Aero-medical operations, further developing Bangladesh’s ability to respond to humanitarian disasters. The United States, with Bangladesh’s Army and Navy,

develop an Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) capability for Bangladesh, and operated the new RQ-21 Blackjack system. The effort enabled Bangladesh to monitor its maritime domain, secure its borders, and conduct peacekeeping missions.

Whereas, hundreds of social media accounts loyal to the ousted regime of Sheikh Hasina burst into outrage, deep into conspiracy theories that the Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus Interim Government has opened the floodgate for “clandestine operation” to enable Bangladesh military forces to militarily strengthen the Myanmar rebels to oust the military junta in the capital Naypyidaw. The social media was abuzz that the US military officers had “secretly” arrived in Bangladesh and did not register their names at the hotel.

The second conspiracy theory, which was widely floating in social media and many suggests that the US military presence was to determine a suitable base which would make their presence felt in South Asia and also monitor South-East Asia. Well, the Bangladesh authority did not bother to counter the conspiracy theories that attempted to undermine the joint military exercise.

In August 2016, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, during a meeting with former Secretary of State John Kerry in Dhaka, expressed a “very clear” desire to cooperate with the U.S. “very, very closely” on fighting terrorism. Kerry announced the two countries had agreed to “additional steps by which our intelligence and law enforcement will work together to try to get ahead of this.”

Secretary of State, said the US



and the West are deeply worried after evidence of the presence of Islamic State jihadists operating in Iraq and Syria has sleeping cells in “eight entities around the world, and one of them is in South Asia.” He deliberately did not mention the name of Afghanistan. He, however, disclosed that Islamic State extremists are in contact with some operatives in Bangladesh, and there was no argument about it from the government officials he met with here, including the prime minister.

Hasina’s government was blamed by scores of terrorism analysts and security experts for “having its head in the sand” about such links, repeatedly terming the attacks as home-grown. Meanwhile, popular India Today media published a docu-

mentary titled: Strategic Drills In India’s Backyard: US Footprint In Bangladesh Rising.

Another media News Arena India on 15 September wrote in an article that India’s intelligence circle, the US troops’ arrival has fueled speculation amid a noticeable uptick in American military activity in Bangladesh following the fall of the Hasina regime. The same article was widely quoted on social media that the US military officers refrained from registering their names with the front desk and slipped into pre-booked rooms.

“The purpose of the exercise remains vague, with officials mentioning Cox’s Bazar as a likely location. The Bangladesh Army has largely remained cagey about the presence of US forces, apart from acknowledg-

ing formal collaborations such as Operation Pacific Angel and Tiger Lightning-2025,” wrote News Arena India without mentioning the source of information. The presence of C-130s has reinforced speculation about the scope of US military activities in Bangladesh, etcetra, etcetra.

In the mid-60s, the radical left students to imbibe dissent against the military dictator General Ayub Khan of Pakistan said that he had leased Saint Martin’s island in the southeast tip of the country to the United States to build a military base to counter India.

The conspiracy theory of St. Martin given away to the Americans has cropped up several times since its independence in 1971. They were deliberately blamed for different regimes for

facilitating inroads for America to counter the regional influence of India and China.

Bangladesh’s only coral island, Saint Martin, the Department of Environment (DoE) in 1999 declared the 8 Sq Km isles an “Ecologically Critical Area (ECA)”. It warned that the geo-class of a tiny island cannot be changed without the permission of the DoE. A British team of surveyors in 1900 included Saint Martin’s island as part of the British Raj in India and named it after a Christian priest, Saint Martin.

Green activists and environmentalists say the island is home to several globally endangered marine turtles and birds, including the rare Pacific reef-egret, red crab, dolphin, and vulnerable olive Ridley sea turtles, which are also on the verge of disappearance.

Professor Kawser Ahmed, dean of the Earth and Environmental Sciences Faculty of Dhaka University, in his article published in Ocean Science Journal in 2020, predicts that coral species will completely disappear by 2045.

Earlier, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, environment adviser to the Interim Government, doubted whether an ecologically threatened island would be suitable for any military purpose. Political historian and researcher Mohiuddin Ahmad, quoted in the largest circulated Bangla newspaper, Prothom Alo that he first heard in February 1971 about leasing Bhola’s Monpura island out to the USA.

The rumor took wings after the then fiery opposition leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had parley with the US Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph Simpson Farland, on 28 February 1971 – a

month before the genocidal campaign ‘Operation Searchlight’ launched by the Pakistan military, which sparked the liberation war.

Indian media quoting Hasina from a press conference in July 2023, she asked, “How did [opposition] BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) come to power in 2001?” She continued that they came to power by pledging to sell [natural] gas [to India]. Now do they want to sell the country [to the United States] or come to power by pledging to sell Saint Martin’s island,” she told loyalist journalists. Her words spread like wildfire and were injected into the minds and hearts of millions of supporters that Americans have an interest in the ‘critically endangered’ tiny island.

She blames BNP for negotiating with Washington, DC, to give away the ‘critically endangered’ coral island to America for a military establishment to watch over a huge swath of the Bay of Bengal, which merges with the Indian Ocean in the far south. BNP countered her statement and said, “No country signs a deal with the opposition; it is signed with the government.”

On the other hand, the United States State Department’s former spokesperson Matthew Miller scoffed at the rumor centering on the island and the USA. In a press briefing in Washington, DC, he confidently said, “We have never engaged in any conversations about taking over Saint Martin’s island,” he remarked. Despite the denial by the US official, the loyalist of Hasina still blows the horn that the American military presence is interpreted as the establishment of a strategic naval base in the ocean of Bangladesh.

Gen Z and the Death of the Written Word

By: Satyabrata Borah

The written word is one of humanity’s most profound and enduring inventions.

From the cuneiform tablets of ancient Mesopotamia to the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, the act of putting pen to paper has been the primary engine of civilization, the vessel for knowledge, and the intimate medium of human connection for over five millennia. Today, that foundational skill is undergoing a silent but seismic shift. As Generation Z, the first true cohort of digital natives, increasingly turns to screens for every aspect of communication, education, and entertainment, the ancient art of handwriting is quietly receding. This is not merely a nostalgic lament for the loss of cursive or the aesthetic pleasure of a well-formed letter; it is a fundamental change with profound implications for how we think, how we learn, and how we connect with one another.

The cognitive act of handwriting is a remarkably complex neurological process. It involves the simultaneous integration of fine motor skills, visual recognition, and cognitive thought. When a child, or an adult for that matter, forges a letter by hand, they are engaging the brain in a way that is qualitatively different from typing. The deliberate, physical effort required to shape each letter creates a unique neural pathway, forging a stronger memory trace. Studies using functional MRI scans have shown that the brain activity in children learning to write by hand is far more extensive and robust than in those who are simply typing or tracing letters. The act of writing activates the massive neural network responsible for working memory, encoding new information, and even generating ideas. It is a full-brain workout.

This neurological engagement has a direct and powerful impact on learning and memory. Students who take notes by hand consistently demonstrate better recall and a deeper conceptual understanding of the material than those who type their notes. The reason is one of necessary synthesis. A typist can often transcribe a lecture verbatim, a relatively passive process that requires minimal cognitive engagement. A writer, by contrast, cannot keep up with word-for-word transcription. They are forced to listen, process, summarize, and capture the essence of the idea in their own words. This act of distillation is where true learning occurs. Handwriting necessitates engagement, and engagement fosters comprehension. As this tool vanishes from classrooms and lecture halls, replaced by the sleek effi-

ciency of the laptop, we risk creating a generation of excellent transcribers who may struggle with the deeper art of critical analysis and synthesis.

Beyond the classroom, the decline of handwriting represents a subtle erosion of a deeply personal form of expression. For centuries, a handwritten letter was more than just a message; it was a tangible piece of the sender. The idiosyncrasies of their script, the pressure of the pen on the paper, the occasional smudge or cross-out—all of these elements carried meaning. A love letter, a note of condolence, a postcard from a distant land: these artifacts had a physical and emotional weight that a text message or email can never replicate. They required time and intention, a conscious investment of self that is often absent in digital communication. The shift to digital text is, of course, driven by undeniable virtues: speed, efficiency, and accessibility. The ability to communicate instantly across vast distances, to edit and revise with ease, and to provide tools for those with learning differences is revolutionary and overwhelmingly positive. However, the trade-off is a move towards homogenization and impermanence. Digital text is uniform. A message composed in Helvetica on one iPhone looks identical to one composed on another. The personality is stripped away, contained only in the choice of emoji or turn of phrase. Furthermore, our digital communications exist as ephemeral data points, easily deleted, lost to a corrupted hard drive, or forgotten in an endless scroll. A handwritten letter, however, can be discovered decades later in an attic, a physical portal to another time and a lasting testament to a relationship.

For Generation Z, this is the norm. Their world is one of instantaneous communication, dominated by the rhythms of texting, social media updates, and video calls. The patience and effort required for handwriting can feel anachronistic, like using a quill instead of a ballpoint pen. The concern among educators and cognitive scientists is not that this generation is failing to communicate, but that the very nature of their communication is shaping their cognitive development in unforeseen ways. The instant gratification of digital feedback, the constant switching between tabs and applications, and the passive consumption of content may be training the brain for distraction rather than deep focus, for skimming rather than immersion.

The potential toll extends beyond individual cognition to our collective cultural and historical

record. Paleographers and historians rely on the ability to read original documents to understand the past. Diaries, ledgers, personal correspondence, and draft manuscripts provide invaluable, unfiltered insights into historical events and everyday life. If future generations lose the ability to read, let alone write, in cursive or even clear print, a vast archive of human experience becomes inaccessible, locked away in a script they can no longer decipher. We are at risk of creating a break in the chain of historical continuity, a new form of illiteracy that severs our tangible link to the past.

Addressing this issue does not require a Luddite rejection of technology. It calls instead for a conscious and balanced approach, a recognition that some tools, however ancient, possess unique and irreplaceable value. The solution lies in integration, not substitution. Schools can champion a “both/and” approach, ensuring that alongside digital literacy, students are given the time and opportunity to develop their handwriting skills. Encouraging journaling, creative writing by hand, or art projects that involve lettering can keep this neural pathway active. Parents can model the value of handwriting by writing notes to their children, keeping family journals, or simply encouraging moments of offline reflection. On a personal level, we can all choose to reintroduce handwriting into our lives in small, meaningful ways. The act of writing a to-do list by hand can cement the day’s priorities more firmly in the mind. Jotting down ideas in a notebook during a meeting can foster greater creativity and connection than typing behind a screen. Writing a heartfelt thank-you note or a letter to a friend remains one of the most powerful and personal gestures available to us.

The story of human progress is not a linear march toward ever-greater efficiency where older tools are simply discarded. It is a complex tapestry where we must continually assess what we gain and what we leave behind. The five-thousand-year-old skill of handwriting is more than a mechanical act; it is a deeply human technology that has shaped our brains, our culture, and our connections for centuries. To allow it to vanish quietly into the digital ether would be to lose a part of ourselves. Preserving it is not about clinging to the past, but about ensuring that future generations possess the full richness of human cognitive and expressive potential, equipped with both the power of the processor and the profound simplicity of the pen.

‘Splitting Atoms, Chasing Suns: The power that could save or destroy us’

By: Dipraj Chakrabarty

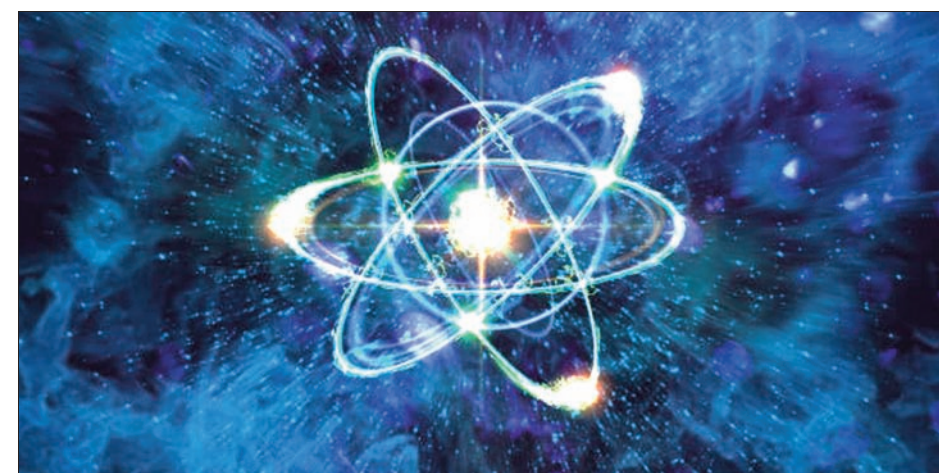
The atom, once thought indivisible, revealed within its depths forces powerful enough to alter the course of civilization. From the first chain reaction to the promise of harnessing the fire of the stars, nuclear science has carried with it both the specter of annihilation and the vision of renewal. At the heart of this paradox lie two processes, fission and fusion, whose scientific foundations may appear parallel yet whose implications diverge dramatically. They are the twin pathways by which humankind has learned, and still strives, to command the energy hidden in the very fabric of matter.

Nuclear fission, the splitting of heavy nuclei such as uranium or plutonium, was the first of these processes to be mastered. When struck by a neutron, an atomic nucleus fragments into lighter elements, releasing a surge of energy and additional neutrons capable of sustaining a chain reaction. This principle, first weaponized in the Second World War, gave birth to an era defined as much by deterrence as by discovery. The mushroom clouds over Hiroshima and Nagasaki testified to fission’s destructive potential, while the subsequent development of civilian reactors heralded its capacity to illuminate cities, fuel economies, and offer an alternative to carbon-heavy combustion. The magnitude of its power is difficult to overstate: a small quantity of fissile material can yield an energy output that would otherwise demand tons of coal or barrels of oil, thus positioning nuclear fission as both efficient and geopolitically consequential.

Yet this gift is tempered by profound liabilities. Fission’s very efficiency produces waste of extraordinary longevity, isotopes that remain hazardous for millennia and whose storage continues to vex both scientists and policymakers. The disasters at Chernobyl and Fukushima etched into collective memory the perils of human error and natural catastrophe in the nuclear age. Unlike coal smoke that dissipates into the atmosphere or oil that burns away, nuclear accidents leave scars that linger, invisible yet potent, for generations. It is this tension, between carbon-free promise and catastrophic risk, that explains why nations remain deeply divided over the future of fission power.

If fission represents humankind’s first engagement with the nuclear realm, fusion embodies its most audacious aspiration. Fusion is the process that powers the stars, the union of light nuclei, most often isotopes of hydrogen, under conditions so extreme that matter itself becomes plasma. At temperatures exceeding one hundred million degrees Celsius, protons overcome their natural repulsion and merge to form helium, releasing an almost unimaginable amount of energy. Unlike fission, fusion’s fuel is abundant, its byproducts benign, and its process inherently resistant to runaway reaction. It is, in short, the dream of an energy source as vast as the oceans and as clean as the air.

But dreams exact their price. For more than half a century, laboratories have pursued the holy grail of “net energy gain,” the moment when a fusion reaction yields more energy than is required to sustain it. Lasers, superconducting magnets, and ingenious engineering have produced spectacular milestones, from fleeting bursts of ignition in California to the ambitious international collaboration at ITER in France. Yet fusion continues to recede like a horizon, tantalizingly near in principle, but in practice still decades away from commercial reality. The sun’s effortless alchemy is achingly difficult to



replicate within the confines of terrestrial machines.

Placed side by side, fission and fusion appear as opposites in more than just physical mechanics. Fission is a mature, operational technology, fraught with risk but essential to current energy matrices. Fusion remains experimental, promising abundance but elusive in realization. Fission carries the stigma of association with weapons and waste, while fusion is unburdened by such history, cloaked instead in an aura of scientific optimism. Where one provokes public suspicion, the other inspires collective hope. The contrast is not merely scientific but symbolic, a reflection of humanity’s oscillation between fear and aspiration.

The geopolitical dimension of this dichotomy cannot be overlooked. Fission technology, from its inception, was inseparable from state power, shaping doctrines of deterrence and dictating the contours of the Cold War. Even today, access to uranium enrichment or plutonium reprocessing remains a flashpoint of international diplomacy, for the line between reactor fuel and bomb material is perilously thin. Fusion, by contrast, carries minimal proliferation risk. Should it be mastered, it would not only transform energy markets but also recalibrate the balance of power, favoring nations that lead in scientific innovation rather than those that sit upon fossil reserves. It is little wonder that the world’s great powers invest heavily in fusion research, seeing in its eventual triumph both ecological salvation and strategic advantage.

From an environmental perspective, the stakes are equally profound. Humanity’s dependence on fossil fuels has driven the climate to the brink, demanding urgent alternatives. Renewable sources such as wind and solar have surged, yet their intermittency and storage challenges reveal limits. Fission, though controversial, offers a bridge, providing reliable baseload power without carbon emissions, while fusion, if realized, promises a definitive solution. The dilemma is temporal: the world cannot afford to wait for fusion’s perfection, yet it cannot ignore its potential. Thus policymakers must navigate a delicate balance, deploying fission prudently, expanding renewables aggressively, and sustaining the long, uncertain pursuit of fusion.

Public perception remains a decisive factor. In some nations, nuclear energy is synonymous with catastrophe, prompting outright rejection. Germany’s decision to shutter its nuclear plants exemplifies this distrust. Elsewhere, as in France, nuclear energy is embraced as indispensable, providing the majority of the nation’s electricity. Fusion, still largely an abstraction, escapes such polarization. It is more vision than reality, more promise than policy, and so it continues to enjoy a reputation untainted by acci-

dents. This divergence in public sentiment underscores the narrative

power of history: what humanity has already experienced shapes what it fears, while what it has yet to attain shapes what it hopes for.

For India, these global debates intersect with its own ambitious national roadmap. The country has signalled its determination to harness nuclear energy not only through advanced fission technologies but also by investing steadily in the future of fusion. The government has set a target of 100 gigawatts of nuclear capacity by 2047, relying on small modular reactors and fast breeder reactors such as the long-anticipated prototype at Kalpakkam. At the same time, India is a key participant in the ITER collaboration and has outlined a domestic fusion strategy that looks towards the construction of a demonstration reactor by 2060. This envisioned facility, sometimes referred to as INDRA, is expected to produce hundreds of megawatts of electricity while breeding more tritium fuel than it consumes. By embedding fusion into its long-term energy planning, India is not merely pursuing scientific prestige but preparing for a mid-century energy mix that balances renewables, fission, and fusion in pursuit of its 2070 net-zero commitments. Such foresight underscores that while fusion may still be decades away, serious nations cannot afford to stand idle while others define the future.

Ultimately, the debate over fission and fusion is less about physics than about the choices of civilization. These processes embody our mastery over nature at its most fundamental level, yet they also reveal the fragility of that mastery. Fission taught us that immense power can be both weapon and tool, liberation and liability. Fusion reminds us that the horizon of possibility is ever receding but never unreachable. To turn either away entirely would be folly; to embrace them without caution would be perilous. The challenge lies in discerning how best to employ these forces in service of humanity rather than to its ruin.

As the twenty-first century unfolds, with climate urgency pressing and energy demand soaring, the atom may once again prove decisive in shaping the destiny of nations. Whether through the mature yet fraught pathways of fission or the still-distant promise of fusion, nuclear energy will remain central to the conversation about how humanity powers its future. The story of the atom is, at its heart, the story of human ambition: our capacity to probe the unseen, to command forces beyond imagination, and to wrestle with the moral consequences of our ingenuity. In the smallest particles of matter, we have found both the shadow of destruction and the light of salvation. The choice of which will prevail is not written in physics, but in the wisdom with which we govern our discoveries.

'We're frank with our friends and we see India as a good friend and as a partner'

President Trump, PM Modi share 'very positive' relationship: US official

NEW YORK, Sept 25: US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi share a "very, very positive" relationship and will meet, a senior State Department official has said, while underlining that planning is underway for the next Quad Summit, expected either later this year or in early 2026.

India is slated to host leaders from the US, Australia, and Japan for the Quad summit. The 2024 edition of the summit was held in the US at Wilmington, Delaware.

"In terms of meetings coming soon, I certainly don't want to get ahead of announcing anything for the President, but I'm sure you'll see the two (PM Modi and President Trump) meet," the State Department official here told PTI on Wednesday.

"They have a very, very positive relationship. We've got a Quad Summit, we're working on planning, so at some point that will happen, if not this year, early next year. Working on the dates of that," the official said.

Describing the ongoing US-India engagements as "incredibly productive", the official said "continuous positive developments" are expected in the coming months.

"We have differences. It's been clear over the last few weeks that we've been working through some differences, particularly when it comes to trade and the purchase of Russian oil. We're working through those," the official said.

The official also referred to Trump's recent phone call to Modi to wish him on his 75th birthday, describing the exchange as "incredibly positive".

On the diplomatic front, the official said US Ambassador nominee to India and Special Envoy for South and Central Asia Sergio Gor is one of the closest people to the President. He will be confirmed very soon and will be the US rep-



representative in New Delhi.

"I think that shows the importance the President puts on this (US-India relationship)," the official said.

The official further underlined that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's first meeting on the margins of the 80th UN General Assembly session was with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Describing the hour-long meeting on Monday as "incredibly productive", the official said talks covered a wide range of issues, including trade, defence, and technology.

While acknowledging that there has been "a bit of turbulence" in ties, the official in the briefing, underlined that President Trump is candid about his views and "not shy when he is frustrated with countries," which offers a transparent view of US positions.

"We're frank with our friends and we see India as a good friend and as a partner, and as really a partner of the future," the official said. On India's continued purchase of Russian oil, the official confirmed that the matter was raised in the bilateral meeting between Rubio and Jaishankar earlier this week.

The issue was "absolutely discussed as it's discussed in every

single engagement we have... The President has been incredibly clear. He wants to end the war in Ukraine. He does not want revenue going through Russia... He's been clear with our European partners. He's been clear with India. So we raise that at every opportunity that we wish to cut off this revenue stream for (Russian President Vladimir) Putin", the official said.

Responding to questions about the US not applying similar pressure on China, the official asserted that the Trump administration is dealing with Beijing "on its own right, and they are hearing a lot of these messages".

India, the official said, is certainly not different from the continuous pressure the Trump administration is placing elsewhere, including on the European Union, which is also having to hear this "tough" message.

The official also cited a bipartisan bill in the US Congress, co-sponsored by 85 Senators, that proposes 500% tariffs on countries buying Russian oil, adding that the current 25% tariff imposed by Washington "doesn't look so bad" in comparison.

"But we continue to put pressure on these countries to stop, to cut off the revenue when it comes to Russian energy," the official said.

At least 17 killed in Gaza Strip as leaders ramp up pressure for ceasefire

DEIR AL-BALAH(GAZA STRIP), Sept 25: At least 17 people were killed Thursday in Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, according to local health officials, as international pressure for a ceasefire continued to grow.

On the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, French President Emmanuel Macron told France 24 his country had recognised a Palestinian state on the conviction it "is the only way to isolate Hamas," which has proved itself able to regenerate even after many of its leaders have been killed. "Total war in Gaza is causing civilian casualties but can't bring about the end of Hamas," he said in the interview Wednesday. "Factually, it's a failure."

He said he had been lobbying US President Donald Trump to press Israel again for a ceasefire, telling him "you have an important role to play — you who supports peace, who wants to bring peace to the world." "You cannot stop the war if there is no path to peace," the French president added.

Deadly strikes hit central and southern Gaza

Meanwhile in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, 12 people were killed in an Israeli attack on the central town of Zawaida that hit a tent and a house, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the nearby city of Deir al-Balah. Eight children were among the victims, according to the hospital, and family members said another girl was still under the rubble.

The hospital said another girl was killed in an airstrike that hit a tent in Deir al-Balah, and that it was caring for seven others injured in that attack. In the southern city of Khan Younis, another Israeli attack hit an apartment building, killing four people, according to the Nasser Hospital where the bodies were taken.

Netanyahu denounces leaders who have recognized a Palestinian state

On Monday ahead of the open-



ing of the UN General Assembly meetings, France, Andorra, Belgium, Luxembourg, Malta, and Monaco announced or confirmed their recognition of a Palestinian state in the hopes of galvanizing support for a two-state solution to the Mideast conflict. Their announcements came a day after the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Portugal did the same, in defiance of Israel and the United States.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lashed out at the idea early Thursday before heading to New York himself where he was to address the assembly on Friday.

"At the UN, General Assembly I will speak our truth," he told reporters. "I will denounce those leaders who, instead of denouncing the murderers, the rapists, the child burners, want to give them a state in the heart of the land of Israel. It will not happen."

At separate events in New York on Wednesday, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Trump's lead negotiator Steve Witkoff both offered optimistic views about what Witkoff called a "Trump 21-point plan for peace" that was presented to Arab leaders on Tuesday.

The US has not released details of the plan or said whether Israel or Hamas accepts it, but Netanyahu suggested Israel's position had not changed.

The Israeli leader said when he travels from New York on to Washington to meet with Trump, he would "discuss with him the

great opportunities our victories have brought and also our need to complete the goals of the war: to return all our hostages, to defeat Hamas and to expand the circle of peace that is open to us."

The US, along with Egypt and Qatar, have spent months trying to broker a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release. Those efforts suffered a major setback earlier this month when Israel carried out an airstrike targeting Hamas leaders in Qatar. The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people and taking 251 hostage. Forty-eight captives are still inside Gaza, around 20 of them believed by Israel to be alive, after most of the rest were freed in ceasefires or other deals.

Israel's ongoing retaliatory offensive has killed more than 65,000 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. It doesn't say how many were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up around half the fatalities. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government. UN agencies and many independent experts consider its figures to be the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties. Israel launched another major ground operation earlier this month in Gaza City, which experts say is experiencing famine. More than 300,000 people have fled, but up to 700,000 are still there, many because they can't afford to relocate. (AP)

South Korea says North has 4 uranium enrichment facilities to build nuclear weapons

SEOUL, Sept 25: A top South Korean official said Thursday that North Korea is operating a total of four uranium enrichment facilities, adding to outside assessments that it has multiple covert atomic plants along with the widely known site near the capital of Pyongyang.

The North's leader Kim Jong Un has called for a rapid expansion of his country's nuclear weapons programme and recently said he would never make the arms a negotiating point in response to overtures by US President Donald Trump.

The South's Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said uranium enrichment centrifuges at the four facilities — which would include the known site at Yongbyon, about 100 kilometres north of Pyongyang — are running everyday and stressed the urgency to stop the North's nuclear programme. Chung did not elaborate further on the location of the other, undisclosed nuclear sites. He spoke about the North with local reporters, according to his ministry.

A nuclear stockpile
Chung cited an assessment that the North possesses 2,000 kilograms of highly enriched uranium. He first said that was based on intelligence but the ministry later clarified it was attributed to civilian experts.

If confirmed, the amount would also signal a sharp increase in North Korea's stockpile of nuclear material.

In 2018, Stanford University scholars, including nuclear physicist Siegfried Hecker who had previously visited the Yongbyon complex, said the North had about 250 to 500 kilograms of highly enriched uranium, sufficient for 25 to 30 nuclear devices.

Nuclear weapons can be built using either highly enriched uranium or plutonium, and North Korea has facilities to produce both at Yongbyon. Last year, North Korea released photographs of what it said was a uranium enrichment facility, the first such disclosure since it showed the one at Yongbyon to Hecker and others in 2010. (AP)

Paris court rules former President Sarkozy will have to go to prison even if he appeals

PARIS, Sept 25: A Paris court sentenced former French President Nicolas Sarkozy to 5 years in prison and — in a major surprise — said he'll be incarcerated even if he appeals, after finding him guilty Thursday in his trial for alleged illegal campaign financing by Libya.

The court said the date of his incarceration will be decided later, sparing the 70-year-old the humiliation of being marched out of the courtroom by police officers and going straight to jail.

The court found Sarkozy guilty of criminal association in a plot from 2005 to 2007 to finance his campaign with funds from Libya in exchange for diplomatic favours. But it cleared him of three other charges — including passive corruption, illegal campaign financing and concealment of the embezzlement of public funds.

The court also found two of Sarkozy's closest associates when he was president — former ministers Claude Guéant and Brice Hortefeux — guilty of criminal association but likewise acquitted them of some other charges.

Overall, the ruling suggested that the court believed that the men conspired to seek Libyan funding for Sarkozy's 2007 campaign but that judges weren't convinced that

the conservative leader himself was directly involved in the funding effort or that any Libyan money ended up being used in his winning campaign.

The chief judge, in an hours-long reading of the lengthy verdict, said Sarkozy allowed his close associates to reach out to Libyan authorities "to obtain or try to obtain financial support in Libya for the purpose of securing campaign financing." He stood as she read out the verdict.

But the court also said it couldn't determine with certainty that Libyan money ended up financing Sarkozy's campaign. Still, under French law, a corrupt scheme can still be a crime even if money wasn't paid or cannot be proven, the court explained.

Sarkozy, accompanied by his wife, the singer and model Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, was present in the courtroom, which was also filled with reporters and members of the public. Sarkozy sat in the front row of the defendant's seats. His three adult sons were also in the room.

Sarkozy, who was elected in 2007 but lost his bid for reelection in 2012, denied all wrongdoing during a three-month trial earlier this year that also involved 11 co-defendants, including three former ministers.

Despite multiple legal scandals that have clouded his presidential legacy, Sarkozy remains an influential figure in right-wing politics in France and in entertainment circles, by virtue of his marriage to Bruni-Sarkozy.

Alleged Libya financing
The accusations trace their roots to 2011, when a Libyan news agency and Gadhafi himself said the Libyan state had secretly funnelled millions of euros into Sarkozy's 2007 campaign.

In 2012, the French investigative outlet Mediapart published what it said was a Libyan intelligence memo referencing a 50 million-euro funding agreement. Sarkozy denounced the document as a forgery and sued for defamation. The court ruled Thursday that it "now appears most likely that this document is a forgery."

Investigators also looked into a series of trips to Libya made by people close to Sarkozy when he served as interior minister from 2005 and 2007, including his chief of staff.

In 2016, Franco-Lebanese businessman Ziad Takieddine told Mediapart that he had delivered suitcases filled with cash from Tripoli to the French Interior Ministry under Sarkozy. He later retracted his statement. (AP)

US seeks deeper trade, energy ties with 'awesome ally' India: Energy Secretary Wright

NEW YORK, Sept 25: The US seeks greater trade and energy cooperation with its "awesome ally" India, Energy Secretary Chris Wright has said, while acknowledging "friction" between the countries over New Delhi's import of discounted Russian oil under sanctions.

Wright made the remarks at a press conference organised at the New York Foreign Press Centre on Wednesday on the sidelines of the high-level United Nations General Assembly session.

"A lot of my early time when I arrived in my position was dealing with India — the world's largest democracy, an awesome ally of the United States, a fast-growing economy, a truly dynamic society," he said in response to a question by PTI.

Wright said India has a rapidly growing energy demand because of increasing prosperity and opportunity among its people.

"I'm a huge fan of India; we love India. We look forward to more energy trade, more interactions back and forth with India," he said.

Wright was responding to a question by PTI on recent comments by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on expanding energy trade with Washington, and that India's energy security goals will have a high element of US involvement. "And then India is caught up in the middle of another issue," Wright said, referring to New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil.

Wright noted that the US' main concern remains the flow of sanctioned Russian oil to countries like India, China and Türkiye,

which he said is helping fund the war in Ukraine.

"And that's the friction. The friction's on that issue. We want to bring that war to an end. I believe the Indians want to bring that war to an end. And we want to expand our energy cooperation with India — in natural gas, in coal, in nuclear, in clean cooking fuels, in and liquid petroleum gas. India has been a star in that area. So we want nothing more than more trade, energy cooperation with India," he said.

Wright said US President Donald Trump's "greatest passion" is achieving peace in the world.

"When I talk to him, it does not matter what the topic is, peace comes up. How can we use our tools and leverage to drive peace? And the Russian war in Ukraine, of course, is brutal. We all want to see it come to an end," he said.

Responding to a question on potential solutions to reduce India's dependence on Russian oil, Wright said there are many alternative suppliers globally.

"India buys Russian oil because it can buy it for cheaper, because nobody wants to buy Russian oil so they have to sell it at a discount. India has decided to make the tradeoff to buy cheaper oil and sort of look the other way, that's giving money to a guy who's murdering thousands of people every week."

"Of course, we wish India would work with us to buy — you can buy oil from every nation on the Earth, just not Russian oil. That's our position. America has oil to sell, but so does everybody else. We don't want to punish India." (AP)

Issue of drugs doesn't usually get showcased at UN General Assembly, this year is different

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 25: Every year, tons of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and other drugs flow around the world, an underground river that crisscrosses borders and continents and spills over into violence, addiction and suffering. Yet when nations' leaders give the UN their annual take on big issues, drugs don't usually get much of the spotlight.

But this was no usual year. First, US President Donald Trump touted his aggressive approach to drug enforcement, including decisions to designate some Latin American cartels as foreign terrorist organisations and to carry out deadly military strikes on speedboats that he says said were carrying drugs in the southern Caribbean.

"To every terrorist thug smuggling poisonous drugs into the United States of America: Please be warned that we will blow you out of existence," he boasted at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday.

Hours later, his Colombian counterpart fired back that Trump should face criminal charges for allowing an attack on unarmed "young people who were simply trying to escape poverty."

The US "anti-drug policy is not aimed at the public health of a society, but rather to prop up a policy of domination," Colombia's Gustavo Petro bristled, accusing Washington of ignoring domestic drug dealing and production while demonising his own country. The US recently listed Colombia, for the first time in decades, as a nation falling short of its international drug control obligations.

Fissures in approach to the issue are revealed

The barbs laid bare, on global diplomacy's biggest stage, the world's wide and pointed differences over how to deal with drugs.

"The international system is extremely divided on drug policy," said Vanda Felbab-Brown, who has followed the topic as a senior fellow at the Washington-based Brookings Institution think tank. "This is not new, but it's really just very intense at this UNGA."

While the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, climate change and other crises got much of the focus in the UN's marathon week of speeches and meetings, the topic of drugs turned up from Trump's and Petro's tough talk to side events on such themes as gender-inclusive drug policy and international cooperation to fight organised crime.

Some 316 million people worldwide used marijuana, opioids and/or other drugs in 2023, a 28 per cent rise in a decade, according to the most recent statistics available from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The figures don't count alcohol or tobacco use.

The specifics vary by region, with cocaine use growing in Europe, methamphetamine on the rise in Southeast Asia, and synthetic opioids making new inroads in West and Central Africa and continuing to trouble North America, though opioid-related deaths have been falling.

The UN drug office says trafficking is increasingly dominated by organized crime groups with tentacles and partnerships around the world, and nations need to think just as broadly about trying to tackle the syndicates.

"Governments are increasingly seeing organ-



ized crime and drug trafficking as threats to national and regional security and stability, and some are coming around to the fact that they need to join up diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement and central-bank efforts to push back," agency chief of staff Jeremy Douglas said by email.

Although organised crime hasn't featured very prominently in top-level discussions at the General Assembly to date, he said, "we're at a point where this needs to, and hopefully will, change."

Working together can help
Nations pair up in various joint counternarcotics operations and working groups and sometimes form regional coalitions, but some experts and leaders see a need to go global.

Countries need to "pool resources in a fight that must be a common cause among all nations," Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino told the assembly. He said his nation had seized a "historic and alarming" total of 150 tons of cocaine and other drugs this year alone.

To be sure, there is already some global-scale collaboration on drug control. The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs decides what substances are supposed to be internationally regulated under decades-old treaties, and it can make policy recommendations to the UN's member countries. The International Narcotics Control Board monitors treaty compliance.

But the UN is big-tent politics at its biggest, so even as some components of the world body deal with drug enforcement, others emphasise public health programs — substance abuse treatment, overdose prevention and other services — over prohibition and punishments. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, has advocated for decriminalizing at least some drug use while clamping down on illegal markets. Given that policing hasn't reduced substance use or crime, "the so-called war on drugs has failed, completely and utterly," he said last year.

Separately, a UN Development Programme report last week said punitive drug control had led to deaths and disease among users who shied from seeking help, racial disparities in enforcement, and other societal downsides.

At a gathering marking the report's release, former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo deplored that "the global drug control regime has become a substantial part of the problem."

"The question is: Do governments have the wisdom and courage to act?" asked Zedillo, now a Yale professor and a commissioner of the Global Commission on Drug Policy, a Geneva-based anti-drug-war advocacy group.

How can common ground be found?

The other question is whether they could ever agree on what action to take.

Even if countries agree — or say they do — with ending the drug trade and resulting ills, "the objectives might be different, and certain means, tools, resources they're willing to devote to them, are different," Felbab-Brown said.

Nations' own drug laws vary widely. Some impose the death penalty for certain drug crimes. Others have legalised or decriminalised marijuana. At least one — Thailand — legalized it only to have second thoughts and tighten the rules. Countries' openness to needle exchange programs, safe injection sites and other "harm reduction" strategies is similarly all over the map.

As leaders took their turns at the assembly rostrum this week, observers got occasional glimpses of the world's different views of its drug problem.

Tajikistan's president, Emomali Rahmon, called drug trafficking "a serious threat to global security." Guyanese President Irfan Ali endorsed international efforts to address drug trafficking, which he counted among the "crimes that are destroying the lives of our people, especially young people."

Syria's new president, Ahmad al-Sharaa, noted that his administration closed factories that produced the amphetamine-like stimulant Captagon, also known as fenethylline, during his now-ousted predecessor's time. Costa Rican Foreign Minister Arnoldo André Tinoco said drug smuggling networks are exploiting routes travelled by migrants and "taking advantage of the vulnerability of those seeking international protection." (AP)

'Alliances are now chosen strictly on the basis of national interest'

Governor stresses tech-driven warfare, border development

ITANAGAR, Sept 25: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen K T Parnaik (Retd) on Thursday underscored the evolving nature of warfare driven by disruptive technologies and India's shift to "multi-alignment" in foreign policy.

Delivering the keynote address on "Emerging Technologies, Transforming Geopolitics and New Tactics for Future Warfare", at the 3rd edition of the Bharat Defence Conclave in New Delhi, the governor said nations are increasingly entering treaties and alliances while simultaneously strengthening their defence capabilities to deter conflict.

With India's foreign policy moving from Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment, he noted that alliances are now chosen strictly on the basis of national interest, an official statement said here.

Parnaik observed that wars will persist despite mechanisms of peaceful dispute resolution, often rooted in ideology, competition for resources, or power struggles.

He, however, emphasised that the character of warfare is undergoing a profound transformation due to rapid technological advancements.

Reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, the governor spoke of India's push for "Aat-



manirbharta', defence reforms, technological innovation, and national security.

He also highlighted ongoing military reforms, revolutionary and cognitive technologies, and the need to strengthen indigenous defence manufacturing.

Drawing from his tenure as a former Army Commander, Parnaik shed light on security imperatives, border management, and development challenges.

He cited initiatives such as border fencing,

the Bharatmala Pariyojana, termination of the Free Movement Regime, maritime surveillance under the Sagarmala Pariyojana, and the border area development programme.

Parnaik placed special focus on the vibrant village programme, which covers sensitive northern borders in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and Ladakh.

The scheme, he said, is improving infra-

structure, education, healthcare, housing, and communication while reversing migration trends, thereby enabling local communities to serve as "eyes and ears" of security forces.

The governor also lauded the synergy between civil administration and the armed forces in border areas, noting how villagers, farmers, and entrepreneurs support troops with supplies, while the military in turn mentors youth, encourages sports, and conducts community welfare initiatives.

Reflecting on his command of the Northern Command, the world's largest military formation, Parnaik praised the Indian Armed Forces as one of the finest professional forces globally, citing their vast experience in counterterrorism, insurgency, and disaster response. He also underlined their major contribution to UN Peacekeeping missions, calling them "one of the strongest pillars of nation-building".

The session was also attended by Netherlands Ambassador to India Marisa Gerards, Belgium Ambassador Didier Vanderhassel, Director General (Acquisition) in the Ministry of Defence, A Anbarasu, Defence Production Secretary Sanjeev Kumar, and Border Management Secretary under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Dr Rajendra Kumar. (PTI)

Khandu credits Modi's vision for defence success under 'Make in India'



ITANAGAR, Sept 25: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Thursday lauded the transformative impact of 'Make in India' initiative, crediting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for turning the country into a hub of indigenous manufacturing with global reach.

"India's defence power is now Made in India! Thanks to PM Narendra Modi ji's vision, we've transformed indigenous defence manufacturing into a global success story," Khandu said in a post on X, underscoring how the programme has bolstered the country's strategic capabilities.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also echoed similar sentiments, highlighting how the initiative has reshaped India's growth trajectory over the past decade.

"In just over a decade, Make in India has redefined the nation's growth story transforming challenges into milestones and dependence into dominance," Mein said

in a social media post.

Detailing the achievements, Mein pointed out that the initiative had shifted the defence sector from being import-driven to becoming an exporter, boosted manufacturing from 2 to over 300 mobile factories, enabled India's own semiconductor chip, and attracted \$749 billion in FDI, while the GDP doubled in 10 years.

"India is not just making, it's creating, innovating, and leading. This is Aatmanirbhar Bharat in action," he added.

Launched on September 25, 2014, the Make in India campaign has been central to India's economic policy, focusing on 25 key sectors ranging from defence and automobiles to electronics and renewable energy.

Marking its 11th anniversary this year, the initiative is being hailed by leaders across the country as a cornerstone of India's journey toward self-reliance and global competitiveness. (PTI)

Sagalee Parte Dene MPCS Ltd holds annual general body meeting in Balapu

HT Correspondent

BALAPU, Sept 25: The Sagalee Parte Dene Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Ltd. (MPCS) held its Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) at Balapu village, Sagalee, recently with enthusiastic participation from members, community leaders and well-wishers.

The event served as a platform to review the Society's performance, deliberate on cooperative strategies and reaffirm its commitment to rural empowerment. The programme began with the arrival of chief guest and former chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Nabam Tuki, and guest of honour, Er Tech Ramda, SE (Civil), PWD.

The meeting was formally opened with a prayer, followed by a welcome address by the Society's Secretary, who invoked the cooperative's slogan—"Khusi Didi, Khusi Pariwar, Khusi Gao"—a guiding message that reflects the Society's mission of empowering women, strengthening families and uplifting entire villages through collective action. During the AGM, the Society presented a detailed report of its achievements and activities over the past year.

Special focus was given to the work of its six Primary Level Federations (PLFs)—Ompuli Dokum Namlo, Yirkum, Chitum Den, Hoolinam Acham, Gorab Nyato and Nyor Nyobia Den Dokum. Members discussed issues of cooperative management, transparency in financial dealings and strategies to expand income-generating initiatives that can contribute to long-term livelihood sustainability.

Addressing the gathering, chief guest Nabam Tuki praised the MPCS for emerging as a strong pillar of self-reliance and grassroots development in the region.

He highlighted the role of cooperative societies in supporting the objectives of the Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (AR-SRLM), particularly in strengthening women's capacity for leadership and economic participation. Tuki further assured his support in providing essential infrastructure for the MPCS, including furniture and the identification of unused government buildings that could be repurposed as the Society's office.

CM pays tributes to Deen Dayal Upadhyaya on birth anniversary

ITANAGAR, Sept 25: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Thursday paid tributes to BJP ideologue Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya on his birth anniversary, recalling his philosophy of integral humanism and commitment to uplift the last person of society.

Taking to social media, Khandu described Upadhyaya as a "luminous thinker, unmatched organiser, and eternal torchbearer who laid the foundation of a nation driven by values and

compassion".

"Our nation draws its soul from Bharat Mata. Without 'Mata', India would be reduced to nothing more than geography, a lifeless stretch of land," Khandu said in a post on X.

"On his birth anniversary, I bow in reverence to Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya ji, who gifted us the vision of Integral Humanism and Antyodaya, guiding generations on the path of nation-building," the chief minister said.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also remembered the Jana Sangh leader as a source of inspiration whose principles continue to guide India's growth.

"His vision of Ekamta Manavvad and Antyodaya remains a guiding light in our journey towards a society that uplifts every individual. Let us carry forward his legacy by working for a self-reliant, inclusive and compassionate India," Mein said in a social media post. (PTI)

RGU hosts one-day Gatekeeper Training to build mental health resilient campuses

HT Correspondent

RONO HILLS, Sept 25: The Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies (AITS), Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), conducted a one-day Gatekeeper Training programme on September 25 as part of its project on "Suicide Risk Reduction and Improving Mental Health among School and College Students."

The training was aimed at equipping teachers, administrators, staff, counsellors and wardens with the skills to act as "gatekeepers"—individuals trained to identify students at risk of suicide, conduct risk assessments, provide immediate support and make timely referrals to mental health professionals.

Gatekeepers serve as the first line of defence in educational institutions, ensuring that early intervention prevents crises from escalating into suicide deaths.

A total of 13 participants from various higher education institutes took part in the programme. They will serve as members of the Institute Well-Being Teams in their respective institutions. The participants included seven faculty members from NERIST—Bijoy K Mukherjee, associate professor, Electrical Engineering; Bhagyalakshmi N, assistant professor, ECE; Kaushik Ray, assistant professor, CSE; Dr Sayjib Kalita, assistant professor, Mechanical Engineering; Dr Jeetender Singh Khichad, assistant professor, Civil Engineering; Vanita Pandey, assistant professor, Agricultural Engineering; and Dr Gurumayum Ranibala, Assistant Professor, Forestry. Three participants represented the North East Nursing Community Health Science—Licha Yapi, Hostel Warden; Maungkala Aier, assistant profes-

sor; and Roselin Ratan, Nursing Tutor. Two Assistant Professors from Binni Yanga Government College, Dr Rigam Kaye and Yuton Lhamu, along with Sanjeev Kumar Thakur from Vivekananda Kendra College of Teacher Education, also attended the training.

During the technical sessions, Vanita Pandey from NERIST highlighted the growing deterioration of communication within families, stressing how increased dependence on technology and social media is weakening traditional support systems. She observed that this decline in protective factors is leaving individuals more vulnerable to mental health crises.

Welcoming the participants, Dr Tarun Mene, Principal Investigator of the ICMR-AITS project, provided an overview of the initiative's goals. He underlined the urgent need for awareness and preventive strategies in the state, pointing to the rising number of suicide cases and the absence of adequate mental health support systems. Dr Mene stressed the importance of creating resilient and healthy institutional environments, where first-aid mental health support and open conversations around suicide are normalised.

The day-long training was structured to build capacity in key areas: conducting suicide risk assessments, providing first-aid counselling, practicing sensitive communication, and encouraging help-seeking behaviour among students in distress. The final session focused on the creation of Crisis Response Teams within participating institutions, designed to respond swiftly to emergencies and provide coordinated support when a student is identified as being at risk.

Capacity Building Training held in Tawang

HT Correspondent

TAWANG, Sept 25: The tourism sector in Tawang received a major boost on Thursday with the launch of a comprehensive "Refresher cum Capacity Building Training Programme" for local tourism stakeholders.

The initiative, envisioned by Deputy Commissioner Namgyal Angmo, IAS, was organised by the Department of Tourism, Tawang, with the objective of equipping stakeholders with the skills and awareness required to meet the growing demands of the sector.

Addressing the inaugural session, DC Namgyal Angmo underlined that the conduct, behavior and professional approach of stakeholders are central to shaping a visitor's impression of Tawang.

She said tourism must go hand in hand with responsibility, reflecting not only economic opportunity but also a strong commitment to preserving the district's fragile environment, vibrant culture, traditions and heritage.

Stressing a shift in focus from the volume of tourists to the quality of services provided, she remarked, "Tourism is the backbone of our economy. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that every visitor enjoys a safe, clean and memorable experience, while we safeguard our pristine environment and unique cultural identity."

She further noted that capacity-building initiatives such as the one launched on Thursday will empower local participants to deliver visitor-friendly and sustainable services, ultimately boosting Tawang's profile as a premier tourist destination.

District Tourism Officer (DTO) Tsering Dekey, while extending his gratitude to the Deputy Commis-



sioner, described the programme as a visionary and timely intervention.

He urged all participants to apply the training in their professional roles to improve service delivery across the tourism sector.

The training covered a wide range of practical and critical areas. Medical experts from KDS District Hospital, led by Dr Tenzin Kunga, MS, conducted sessions on first aid and basic emergency response, equipping stakeholders with skills essential for handling medical situations involving visitors. The Fire Services Department provided detailed training on fire safety protocols and evacuation drills, while the Police Department, represented by Officer-in-Charge of Tawang Police Station Niya Angu, held sessions on traffic management and parking discipline, key concerns during peak tourist seasons.

Environmental sustainability formed another core component of the programme.

The Department of Forest conducted an awareness session on biodiversity, ecosystem protection and the need for forest conserva-

tion in the face of rising tourist activity.

The Department of Urban Development and Housing supplemented this with practical training on sustainable tourism practices, emphasising effective waste management strategies that align with the government's vision of eco-friendly development.

The programme concluded with an interactive session that enabled participants to share perspectives and raise issues directly related to their experiences in the field.

Officials and stakeholders alike noted that such dialogues are crucial in developing coordinated solutions to the challenges facing the tourism sector in the district.

The day-long event was widely acknowledged as a landmark effort in strengthening the foundation of Tawang's tourism industry.

By building the capacity of local service providers and sensitizing them to safety, sustainability and professionalism, the initiative is expected to greatly enhance visitor satisfaction and further consolidate Tawang's reputation as one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in the Northeast.

Mobile Medical Unit flagged off at Boleng to boost rural healthcare in Siang

HT Correspondent

BOLENG, Sept 25: In a major step towards improving healthcare accessibility in remote areas of Siang district, a Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) was launched at Boleng on Thursday.

The unit was flagged off jointly by Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Cooperation and Transport Minister Ojing Tasing and Deputy Commissioner Taji Taggu in the presence of District Medical Officer Johny Darang, ZPC Oshi Pabin Mibang, administrative officers and heads of offices.

The MMU, a fully equipped medical van, will function as a moving hospital with a dedicated team comprising a doctor, nurse, lab technician, data entry operator and driver. It will travel across the district to provide free medical consultation, medicines and laboratory services to far-flung villages. Facilities available include liver and kidney function tests, blood sugar tests, blood grouping and serology tests for HIV, malaria and scrub typhus, among others.

Speaking on the occasion, minister Tasing said the MMU is the first of its kind in Siang district and is expected to benefit patients who are unable to reach hospitals or health centres. He urged villagers to make use of the facility and also appealed for collective responsibility in ensuring the van's cleanliness and maintenance for long-term service. The MMU has been provided under the outreach activities of the National Hydro-Electric Power Corporation Ltd. (NHPC), which will fund it for four years. It will be operated by Siang Rural Development Society, an NGO based in Laimekuri, Dhemaji district of Assam, in coordination with the District Medical Office, Siang.

AI Integration Workshop held for ITI instructors in Arunachal Pradesh

Officials say workshop marks a critical milestone in state's efforts to empower vocational instructors

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 25: In a significant step towards modernising vocational education, the Department of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (SDE), in collaboration with the Rural Development Society (RDS), Naharlagun, and TUD FaCE Institute, Germany, organised a two-day workshop on "Empowering ITI Instructors with Artificial Intelligence for Smarter Teaching & Training."

The programme was hosted at the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT), Naharlagun, and brought together ITI instructors from across Arunachal Pradesh.

The workshop was designed to familiarize vocational instructors with Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and methodologies that can revolutionise teaching practices and improve learning outcomes.

Through interactive sessions, expert lectures and hands-on training, participants explored how AI can be applied to curriculum delivery, student evaluation and skill-

based training, thereby aligning ITI education with contemporary industry requirements.

Director of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Sibom Passing, in his address, underlined the transformative role of AI in reshaping vocational training. He explained how AI technologies can help instructors personalise teaching, automate repetitive tasks, and provide real-time feedback to learners.

"By integrating AI into ITI curricula, we can ensure that students acquire not just technical knowledge but also industry-relevant skills that prepare them for the future job market," he said, calling for a strategic adoption of smart technologies to raise the overall quality and impact of vocational education in the state.

Assistant Director, SDE, Jumbom Riba, described the initiative as a progressive step in bridging the gap between conventional teaching and modern industrial demands.

He noted that AI-powered ap-

proaches empower instructors with data-driven insights and innovative teaching strategies, leading to more effective and personalised training.

Riba encouraged instructors to embrace AI tools as a way of keeping vocational education relevant in a fast-evolving employment landscape.

The technical sessions were led by Jorg Hafer, a trainer from TUD FaCE Institute, Germany, who delivered an impactful lecture on AI-driven curriculum development.

Hafer, recognised for his expertise in educational innovation, presented frameworks for adaptive learning models, intelligent teaching tools and the development of dynamic curricula.

He stressed the importance of embedding AI strategically within vocational training systems to make learning more engaging and to enhance the overall effectiveness of instructors.

President of the Rural Development Society, Tabu Dui, reaffirmed his organisation's longstanding

commitment to rural development and education since 1996.

He noted that the Society is now expanding its focus to vocational training and expressed readiness to organise similar capacity-building workshops in the future to strengthen ITIs across Arunachal Pradesh. The inaugural session of the workshop was also attended by senior consultants of the Project Management Unit (PMU), SDE—Suman Shukla and Vivek Raturi—who shared their perspectives on advancing skill development through technology-driven solutions.

Officials said the workshop marks a critical milestone in the state's efforts to empower vocational instructors with cutting-edge tools and knowledge.

By equipping trainers with AI-driven teaching methods, the government hopes to make ITIs more responsive to industry needs, ensure better learning outcomes for students, and strengthen Arunachal Pradesh's position in the emerging digital economy.



note
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'The BJP gov't at the Centre is advancing the clean energy campaign by turning it into a people's movement'

Power production essential for any country to develop rapidly in 21st century: PM

BANSWARA (RAJASTHAN), Sept 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday accused the erstwhile Congress government of ignoring the importance of electricity, saying that increasing power production is necessary for any country to develop rapidly in the 21st century.

"Before 2014, there were 2.5 crore households in India that did not have electricity connection. Even after 70 years of Independence, electricity poles had not even been installed in 18,000 villages across the country. The Congress government did not pay any attention to the importance of electricity," Modi said while addressing a public meeting in this Rajasthan district on Thursday.

"Any country that aims to develop rapidly in the 21st century must increase its electricity production. The most successful countries will be those that lead in clean energy," the prime minister said.

The BJP government at the Centre is advancing the clean energy campaign by turning it into a people's movement, he said.

The prime minister on Thursday



laid the foundation for and inaugurated several projects in the fields of renewable energy, water supply, power, road and infrastructure worth Rs 1,22,100 crore during the event in Banswara.

Among the most significant is the Mahi-Banswara nuclear power project, a 2,800 MW facility to be built at a cost of Rs 42,000 crore in Banswara.

Talking about tax reforms, Modi said 11 years ago, the Congress government was engaged in ex-

plotting and looting the people of the country. "In the Congress era, both taxes and inflation were sky-high. There was loot everywhere whereas under the BJP, it is more about savings. The government put an end to Congress' loot after people blessed Modi," the prime minister said. Modi also urged people to adopt 'Swadeshi' in their buying-selling culture to make India self-reliant.

"We have another goal -- Aatmanirbhar Bharat. It is essential

that we do not remain dependent on anyone else. The path to this goes through the mantra of Swadeshi, which we should never forget," he said.

"I would urge all of you, especially the shopkeepers of the country, that whatever we sell should be indigenous. I would also urge my fellow citizens that whatever you buy should also be Swadeshi," Modi added.

The Prime Minister also hit out at the previous Congress government in Rajasthan, saying the state became a hub of paper leak during its rule, when atrocities against women were at their peak.

"Under the Congress, Rajasthan became the hub of paper leaks, the Jal Jeevan Mission was sacrificed due to corruption, atrocities against women were at their peak, and rapists were protected," he said.

After the BJP was voted to power, it strengthened law and order and accelerated development projects in the state, he added.

Today, the BJP government is moving Rajasthan forward on the path of rapid development, Modi said. (PTI)

No difference of view with NSS on Sabarimala issue: Congress

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Sept 25: The Congress-led UDF on Thursday said it has no dispute or differences of opinion with any community or religious organisation on the Sabarimala issue and that it avoided the Global Ayyappa Sangam for political reasons. The statement was made by Congress leader V D Satheesan, a day after the two powerful Hindu caste outfits--Nair Service Society (NSS) and Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam -- came out in support of the ruling LDF stance on the Sabarimala issue. "They (NSS and SNDP) have their own opinion, just like we are entitled to our views. We stand firm on the decision we took. It was a political decision taken by the Congress and UDF and we believe it was correct."

"We are not in conflict with any religious organisation or community," he said.

According to Satheesan, who is the Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly, it was the LDF government which not only did not try to protect the rituals of Sabarimala but actively violated the same by providing entry into the shrine to women under police escort.

"We were the only ones who tried to protect the rituals of Sabarimala," he claimed.

The Congress leader further said that if the Left government was with the devotees, it should have withdrawn the cases registered against thousands of NSS workers, including women, for protesting against women's entry to Sabarimala.

"The government had promised to do so. But it has not done that to date."

He claimed that the Congress and UDF have always taken a secular stand and opposed both minority and majority communalism.

"However, before the Lok Sabha polls in 2024, Pinarayi Vijayan was appeasing minority communalism, and now, in the run-up to the state elections next year, he is trying to appease majority communalism," Satheesan alleged. (PTI)

Centre defends permanent commission policy in Army as SC reserves verdict

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: The Centre on Thursday defended its policy on the grant of permanent commission to Short Service Commission women officers and said the apex court's verdicts on the aspect were being followed without discrimination.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and N Kotiswar Singh reserved its verdict on a batch of 84 officers of the Army. The officers have challenged the denial of grant of permanent commission.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre and the Army, submitted that the 2020 verdict in Babita Puniya case and 2021 verdict in Nitisha case had actually upheld the policy and

whatever faults which were still there and pointed out by the court were eventually corrected.

Justice Kant told Bhati it did not mean that the Army had corrected its policy on permanent commission and whatever faults existed were removed post Nitisha verdict. Concluding her arguments, Bhati said, "No process can satisfy everyone and there will always be heartburn." She said elimination was also part of policy to keep the forces young and it was equally applied to all without discrimination.

Senior advocates Maneka Guruswamy, V Mohana, Abhinav Mukherjee and Rekha Palli, appearing for the SSC officers, advanced counter submissions. (PTI)

India must demonstrate leadership on Palestine issue, says Sonia

'Modi gov't's response abdication of humanity'

New Delhi, Sept 25: Asserting that India needs to demonstrate leadership on the issue of Palestine, Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Thursday slammed the Modi government's stance, saying its response has been characterised by a "profound silence" and an abdication of both humanity and morality.

She said the government's actions appear to be driven primarily by the personal friendship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu rather than India's constitutional values or its strategic interests.

"This style of personalised diplomacy is never tenable and cannot be the guiding compass of India's foreign policy. Attempts to do the same in other parts of the world, most notably in the United States have come undone in the most painful and humiliating ways in recent months," Gandhi said in her article published in The Hindu.

This is the third article by Gandhi on the Israel-Palestine conflict, published in a national daily in the recent past, in which she has vehemently criticised the Modi government's stance on the issue.

India's standing on the world stage cannot be wrapped up into the personal glory-seeking ways of one individual, nor can it rest on its historical laurels. It demands persistent courage and a sense of historical continuity, she said in her article titled 'India's muted voice, its detachment with Palestine'.

Gandhi pointed out that France has joined the United Kingdom, Canada,

Portugal and Australia in recognising Palestinian statehood -- "the first step in the fulfilment of the legitimate aspirations of the long-suffering Palestinian people". More than 150 of the 193 countries that are members of the United Nations have now done so, she said.

Gandhi underlined that India had been a leader in this regard having formally recognised Palestinian statehood way back on November 18, 1988, after years of support to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). She cited the examples of how India raised the issue of apartheid in South Africa even before Independence and during the Algerian struggle for independence (1954-62), India was one of the strongest voices for an independent Algeria.

In 1971, India intervened firmly to prevent genocide in what was then East Pakistan, mid-wifing the birth of modern-day Bangladesh, she pointed out.

On the critical and sensitive issue of Israel-Palestine as well, India has long maintained a delicate but principled position, emphasising its commitment to peace and the protection of human rights, the former Congress chief said.

India needs to demonstrate leadership on the issue of Palestine, which is now a battle for justice, identity, dignity and human rights, Gandhi asserted.

Through multilateral forums such as the UN, the Non-Aligned Movement, and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) observer platforms, India has urged negotiated settlements, adherence to international law, and a cessation of violence, she said.

India has also provided humanitarian and development aid to Palestine, including scholarships for students, support for education and health care, and capacity-building for institutions in Gaza and the West Bank, Gandhi pointed out in her article.

In the last two years, since the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Palestine in October 2023, India has all but relinquished its role, she opined.

"The brutal and inhumane Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023, were followed by an Israeli response that has been nothing less than genocidal. As I have previously raised, more than 55,000 Palestinian civilians have been killed, including 17,000 children," she said. The residential, schooling and health infrastructure of the Gaza Strip has been obliterated, as have agriculture and industry, Gandhi said.

"Gazans have been forced into a famine-like situation, with the Israeli military cruelly obstructing the delivery of much-needed food, medicine, and other aid -- a 'drip-feeding' of aid amidst an ocean of desperation," she said. In one of the most revolting acts of inhumanity, hundreds of civilians have been shot down while trying to access food, she pointed out.

Gandhi opined that the world has been slow to respond, implicitly legitimising the Israeli actions.

The recent moves by several countries to recognise Palestine as a sovereign state are a welcome and long-due departure from the policy of inaction, she said. (PTI)

Age is just a number for PM Modi and he should continue to lead country: Fadnavis

MUMBAI, Sept 25: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said age was just a number for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and he should continue to lead the country till he has the capacity.

Speaking at the India Today Conclave, Fadnavis attacked Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, saying he was "irrelevant to the youth and Gen Z", adding that those who think what happened in Nepal will happen here, should go to the neighbouring country.

PM Modi turned 75 on September 17. He is the third longest serving prime minister of India after Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi and second in terms of an uninterrupted tenure.

Describing Modi as a visionary and efficient leader, Fadnavis said, "Age is just a number for him considering his physical and mental capability. When does the age factor matter - when your physical and mental capacities reduce...But that is not the case with PM Modi. He should continue to lead us till he has the capacity."

Talking about himself, the CM said being a Brahmin does not pose a hurdle in his political path and his future will be decided by the BJP.

"Entire Maharashtra knows my caste and they have accepted me. In 2014, PM Narendra Modi handed me the reins of the state and for three subsequent elections, BJP under me has won more than 100 seats. So the caste issue, which was considered negative in politics, is settled," he said.

When asked whether he would take up any role at the national level, Fadnavis said he will continue to lead the state for the current term of five years, after which the party will decide about his future.

To a query about the recent "Devabhau" advertisements in newspapers, he said the BJP published it to show that the state was functioning as per the ideals of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

"What did the advertisement show? That I am offering floral tributes to the legendary warrior king who didn't discriminate against any community. Marathas were given their due in reservation and the OBC quota wasn't touched," he said. "Why are our political rivals uncomfortable?" he asked.

Full-page newspaper advertisements featuring only Fadnavis were published on September 6 - the last day of the Ganesh festival - generating a lot of curiosity in political circles as there was no mention of the person or group who sponsored it.

On being asked if the advertisement showed that he was all alone in his path, the CM said he was never alone and he has the shield of BJP with him.

The CM said he does not run away from challenges and takes them head on.

"If the Maratha quota issue was a challenge some days ago, now it is the massive rains and floods. That's



the beauty of governance and democracy. No issue is permanently settled in politics," he said.

Replying to a query on Rahul Gandhi's X post on 'Gen Z', Fadnavis said the Congress leader was irrelevant to the youth and Gen Z.

"India's Gen Z is involved in the start-up ecosystem, engineers in AI...They are in Silicon Valley. India's Gen Z thinks differently. Those who think what happened in Nepal will happen here should go to the neighbouring country," Fadnavis said.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha last week launched his fresh offensive against the Election Commission of India (ECI) and reiterated his "vote chori" allegations. In a post on X, he said, "The nation's youth, the nation's students, the nation's Gen Z, will defend the Constitution, protect democracy, and stop vote theft. I always stand with them. Jai Hind!" Fadnavis also said just like the non-creamy layer in OBC reservation, there will be sub-classification in Scheduled Caste (SC) as well. "A committee has been set up to work on it," he said.

Referring to his alliance partners and deputy CMs Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, Fadnavis said all three of them were seasoned leaders and understood the limits of coalition politics.

"They can keep their aspirations and there is no harm in it. In our alliance, BJP is the strong centre pole which keeps the coalition together. In the MVA, all three parties considered themselves equal and hence it didn't last," he said.

The BJP will face the 2029 Maharashtra assembly polls in alliance with Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar.

"In politics nothing is impossible but there will be no change in allies," he said.

When asked about his name doing rounds for the post of BJP president, he said it was only being talked about in media circles. (PTI)

NIT Rourkela develops indigenous force plate for gait profiling

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Researchers at the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela, have developed a low-cost indigenous force plate for measuring multi-axial ground reaction forces (GRF) to help in gait profiling, according to officials.

Force plates are globally recognised as essential diagnostic tools for analysing human musculoskeletal health. Due to high costs and the lack of Indian manufacturers, its availability in India remains limited. Gait profiling is a method of evaluating an individual's walking pattern by comparing their unique gait to a reference dataset of healthy individuals' gait patterns. The new device from NIT Rourkela can

be supplied at one-fourth the price of international systems, making it an affordable alternative, they added.

A patent has been filed for the product and the research has been published in the Journal of Mechanics in Medicine and Biology.

The research team used the indigenously developed force plate along with the motion capture system to evaluate the heel pad stiffness in a non-invasive technique. By studying how the heel pad, the natural cushion of the foot, behaves in people with different body weights, the team has taken a step closer to developing better footwear and treatment strategies to reduce heel pain. (PTI)

RE-ENGAGEMENT OF RETIRED STAFF ON CONTRACTUAL BASIS UNDER LUMDING DIVISION

No. E/283/LM/RE-RS/CN-01/2025 Date: 19-09-2025

Notification for Re-engagement of Retired Staff on Contractual Basis in Lumding Division/NFR

SCHEDULE				
(i)	Date of Publication of Notification	22nd Sept, 2025		
(ii)	Opening Date for Online Application	23rd Sept, 2025		
(iii)	Closing Date for Online Application	12th Oct, 2025		
1. In terms of Railway Board's RBE No. 96/2024, L/No. E(NG)/2024/RC-4/9 dated 15.10.2024, RBE No. 115/2024, L/No. E(NG)/2024/RC-4/9 dated 31.12.2024 and GM(P)/MLG's L/No. E/228/0 Pt. XV (C) dated 17.06.2025, applications are hereby invited from retired Railway Employees (normal retired persons) for engagement under the scheme of 'Re-engagement of Retired Staff in exigencies of service to work in various posts/categories of different department of Lumding Division, N.F. Railway on monthly remuneration basis against vacant posts as mentioned below:-				
SN	Department	Category	Pay Level	No of post to be filled up
1	PERSONNEL	Ch. OS/E	L-8	01
2	PERSONNEL	OS/E	L-6	14
3	PERSONNEL	Sr. Record Sorter	L-2	01
4	PERSONNEL	General Assistant	L-1	01
Total				17
5	S&T	JE/Sig	L-6	9
6	S&T	Tech/II/Sig	L-5	30
7	S&T	JE/Tele	L-6	7
8	S&T	Tech/II/Tele	L-5	10
9	S&T	Steno	L-4	1
Total				57
10	Commercial	Commercial Superintendent	L-7	3
11	Commercial	Chief Reservation Supervisor	L-7	1
12	Commercial	Assistant Reservation Supervisor	L-6	21
13	Commercial	Chief Ticket Inspector/II	L-6	10
14	Commercial	Chief Commercial Clerk	L-6	34
15	Commercial	Senior Commercial cum Ticket Clerk	L-5	14
16	Commercial	Commercial cum Ticket Clerk	L-3	38
Total				121
17	Med/LMG	OS/G	L-6	1
Total				1
18	Mech/LMG	SSE/C&W	Level-7	10
19	Mech/LMG	Tech-I/C&W	Level-5	50
20	Mech/LMG	Assistant/C&W	Level-1	100
Total				160

2. Application are to be submitted ONLINE only through the following link provided in <https://nfr.indianrailways.gov.in>

Direct website link-<https://forms.gle/4RzyxqfQvmJypWj9>

Age Limit : Must be below 64 years age as on 12th Oct, 2025.

Maximum age limit for which re-engagement shall continue will be 65 years.

Applicant can view detailed notification by visiting N.F. Railway's website: www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in (general info.- Departments-Personnel-Walk in interview)

Divisional Railway Manager (P), Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

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SC directs man to handover properties to 80-year-old father

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: In a relief to an 80-year-old man whose son did not allow him to reside in his properties, the Supreme Court has set aside an order which quashed a directive asking the son to vacate the properties.

The apex court said the maintenance tribunal under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, has the power to order eviction of a child or a relative from the property of a senior citizen, in case of a breach of obligation to maintain the elderly.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta passed the order on the father's plea challenging an order of the Bombay High Court passed in April which set aside the tribunal's order directing the son to handover possession of two properties to the father.

Referring to the 2007 Act, the bench said its framework clearly notes that the law was enacted to address the plight of older persons, for their care and protection.

"Being a welfare legislation, its provisions must be construed liberally so as to advance its beneficent purpose. This court on several occasions has observed that the tribunal is well within its powers to order eviction of a child or a relative from the property of a senior citizen, when there is a breach of the obligation to maintain the senior citizen," it said.

The top court's September 12 order said despite being financially stable, the son acted in breach of



his statutory obligations in not allowing the father to reside in the properties owned by him (father).

The top court noted while the appellant was aged about 80 years, his wife was 78-year-old and they have three children.

It said his elder son runs a business. It noted the appellant purchased two properties in Mumbai and he along with his wife moved to Uttar Pradesh leaving their children behind in these properties.

The bench further noted the elder son had taken the properties in his possession and did not allow his father to reside there.

In July 2023, the appellant and his wife filed an application for maintenance and eviction of the occupants from the properties and in June last year, the tribunal directed the son to hand over the possession

of both the premises.

The tribunal further directed a ₹3,000 monthly maintenance to the elderly parents. The tribunal's order was upheld by the appellate tribunal.

The son subsequently moved the high court, which allowed his plea and observed that the tribunal did not have jurisdiction to pass an order for vacation of property against a senior citizen.

Dealing with the case, the apex court said the high court had proceeded on the presumption that the son was also a senior citizen.

"This in our view is erroneous. The record shows that the appellant (father) had moved an application before the tribunal on July 12, 2023 and at that point in time, the respondent's (son) age was 59 years," the bench said.

While setting aside the high court order, it said the high court fell in error in allowing the son's petition on a "completely untenable ground".

The counsel appearing for the son urged the top court for time to vacate the properties.

The bench granted him two week time to furnish an undertaking that he would vacate the premises by November 30, 2025 and in the meantime, the tribunal's order would not be given effect to.

"In the event the undertaking is not filed within the time allowed, it will be open for the appellant (father) to get the order executed forthwith and the interim protection shall stand automatically withdrawn forthwith," the bench said. (PTI)

Swami Vivekananda passed away at a very young age, but the thoughts they left behind still inspire us

Tripura CM stresses honesty, inclusivity in governance

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 25: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said that Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay was a keen politician and patriot who always thought about the culture, tradition, and development of the people of India.

He said that the country and the state are moving forward in the direction indicated by him.

Saha said this at a program organised on the occasion of the Birth Anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay at Muktaghara Auditorium, Agartala.

"Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay was a keen politician and patriot. He sacrificed himself for the country, but these things were not known earlier. The more one knows about Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, the more mature one's mind becomes. There were many legendary personalities in India who gave a lot at a young age and whom we still remember. For example, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Swami Vivekananda passed away at a very young age, but the thoughts they left behind still inspire



us," said Saha.

He further said that Pandit Deendayal emphasised that honesty should be our policy.

"We have to move forward with honesty. He said that everyone should be a friend, everyone should develop, everyone should be a believer, and everyone should make an effort. This is what the famous Prime Minister Narendra

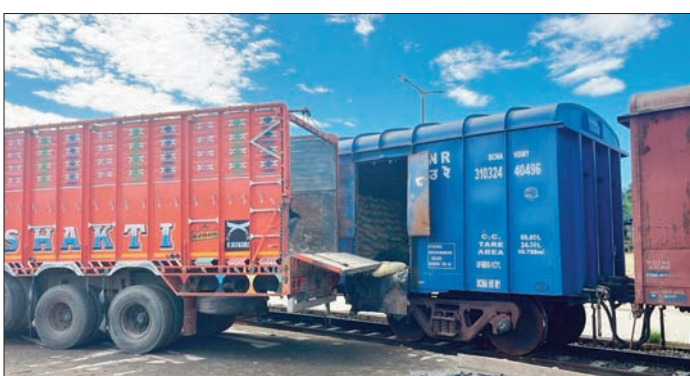
Modi is now emphasizing. Pandit Deendayal said that the benefits of all government development projects should reach the last person in society. This is now being implemented by our Prime Minister, and we are also working in that direction. To reach the people with the benefits of government schemes, good governance activities have been carried out in two phases.

A web portal called 'Amar Sarkar' has been launched for the welfare of the people. This portal has been opened with the aim of solving the daily problems of the common man. The people of rural areas are benefiting as a result, and this is exactly what Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay wanted," he said.

In his speech, the chief minister said that the present government does what it says.

"This will increase the trust of the people in us. Now, people have confidence and trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Prime Minister Modi is taking the country forward by keeping in mind the thoughts of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Pandit Deendayal," he added.

NFR places first cement rake at Molvom, boosting connectivity



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has scripted a new chapter in Nagaland's connectivity with the successful placement and unloading of the first-ever cement rake at Molvom Railway Station.

The rake, consisting of 41 wagons carrying 2,624 tonnes of cement from M/s My Home Industries Pvt Ltd, Telangana, was unloaded at 6:45 pm on September 24 for M/s North East Infra Network.

Covering a distance of about

2,500 km from Mellacheruvu in Telangana, the consignment marks the beginning of freight movement to Molvom, promising cost-effective and eco-friendly transport solutions to industries in the state.

Railway officials said the development will strengthen regional infrastructure, support sustainable logistics, and contribute to Nagaland's socio-economic growth.

The Molvom station falls under the 82.50 km Dimapur-Kohima railway project, which stretches from Dhanisiri in Assam to Zubza in Kohima, spanning 2.75 km in

Assam and 79.75 km in Nagaland.

The line includes eight stations—Dhanisiri, Dhanisripur, Shokhuvi, Molvom, Pherima, Piphema, Menguzuma, and Zubza—along with 27 major bridges, 149 minor bridges, five Road Over Bridges, 15 Road Under Bridges, and 20 tunnels covering 31 km.

The 16.5 km Dhanisiri-Shokhuvi section was commissioned in October 2021, enabling passenger services from Shokhuvi to Naharlagun in Arunachal Pradesh and Mendiathar in Meghalaya.

The 14.64 km Shokhuvi-Molvom stretch was commissioned in March 2025, paving the way for the present freight movement.

Indian Railways has reiterated its commitment to expand rail services in the Northeast, highlighting that the placement of the first rake at Molvom underscores its efforts to connect remote regions, improve logistics, and reduce carbon emissions as part of its Net Zero 2030 mission.

MP appointed BJP's 'saha prabhari' for 2026 Bengal assembly polls



AGARTALA, Sept 25: Tripura MP Biplab Kumar Deb has been appointed as BJP's 'saha prabhari' (deputy in-charge) for next year's West Bengal assembly polls, the party said in a statement on Thursday.

The former CM will be the deputy of Pradesh Prabhari (state in-charge) Bhupendra Yadav, the Union Minister of Forests and Climate Change.

"BJP national president JP Nadda is pleased to appoint Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav as pradesh prabhari and MP Biplab Kumar Deb as saha prabhari for the Assembly elections in West Bengal," party's national general secretary Arun Singh said in a statement. Earlier, Deb had worked as the party's 'saha prabhari' for Haryana polls. (PTI)

Mizoram issues alert after rodent infestation in 3 districts



AIZAWL, Sept 25: The Mizoram government issued an alert to prevent a famine-like situation after a rodent infestation was reported in three districts, which has already affected more than 800 jhum farmers, an official of the Agriculture Department said on Thursday.

Deputy Director (Plant Protection) Lalrindiki told PTI that the rodent infestation is believed to be a symptom of 'Thingtam' or flowering of a particular bamboo species called bambusa tulda (rawthing), which is due in 2025 after 46 years.

The rodent infestation has been reported from several villages in Mamit district and two villages in Lunglei district, she said.

Rodent attack was also reported from Leilak village in Saitual district, she said, noting that a detailed report is awaited.

Lalrindiki said 800 jhum farmers, who mainly grow rice and soybeans, have been affected by the rodent attacks.

Out of 2,500 hectare of land under jhum cultivation, about 158 hectare have so far been infested, she said.

Mamit district, which borders Tripura and Bangladesh, is the worst affected, with 769 farmers from 45 villages facing the attacks.

She said rodenticides or plant protection chemicals were distributed, and teams from the Agriculture Department have been dispatched to the affected villages to guide farmers and village council leaders on how to use them.

"Awareness on mass poisoning of rodents is being carried out, and the department is closely monitoring the situation," she said.

Lalrindiki said district agriculture officers have been instructed to submit a weekly update on the situation.

"The infestation has now been reported in only traditional jhum paddy fields and a few soybean plantations. It is yet to spread to

wet rice cultivation," she said.

"Thingtam", which recurs in a 48-year cycle, last happened in the state in 1977.

Mizoram reported the last rodent attack in 2022, during which at least nine districts were affected.

Due to the flowering of *Melocanna baccifera*, Mizoram experienced a famine-like situation in 2007. However, no one died because of timely financial assistance from the Centre and massive preparation by the state government.

About 70 per cent of the state's population is dependent on agriculture.

The main farming method is slash-and-burn jhum or shifting cultivation, which gives poor yields. With the government making massive efforts, jhum farming practices have been steadily replaced with horticulture or long-term plantation like betel nuts, grapes and pineapple, among others.

The formation of Mizoram was also closely related to famine.

The ten-decade-long insurgency spearheaded by the erstwhile underground Mizo National Front (MNF) was triggered allegedly by the Centre's negligence towards the plights of the Mizos caused by 'mautam' or famine.

The MNF signed a historic peace accord with the Centre in 1986, and Mizoram became the 23rd state of the country in 1987. (PTI)

Tripura Power Minister assures smooth electricity supply during Durga Puja

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 25: The Tripura State Electricity Corporation Limited (TSECL) is fully prepared to provide uninterrupted power supply during the Durga Puja days across the state.

Power Minister Ratan Lal Nath informed this after chairing a virtual meeting with the TSECL MD, Director (Technical), GM (TPGL), GM (TPTL), DGMs, and Senior Managers.

Later, the Minister said that he chaired the virtual meeting on behalf of the Tripura State Electricity Corporation (TSECL) to ensure uninterrupted power supply to all consumers and puja pandals.

"Today we held a review meeting with the Secretary (Power), Managing Director, and all officials. In this meeting, we reviewed our preparations to identify any shortcomings. In our state, we have 16 power divisions and 79 power sub-divisions. We have held meetings with all the divisions and sub-divisions. Directions have been issued that transformers should be properly maintained, and that vehicles and staff must be made available to provide proper services. Additional agencies will be present, and 1912 has been instructed to remain alert," said the power minister.

The Minister further stated from Monarchak, about 60 MW is generated from Rukhla 19 MW, and from Mizoram an additional 40 MW is kept in reserve, which they will provide us during Puja, and we will return to them during Christmas.

"All the substations have been properly maintained. In the meeting, we also took opinions from division managers and senior managers. We are hopeful that, just as we have provided power services without interruption in the last two years, this year too we will ensure the same. Everyone must remain cautious regarding power use. Apart from the control room, we have also decided to deploy an extra team at big puja pandals to take necessary steps. All preventive measures have been taken to avert any kind of incident. All steps have been taken to ensure smooth power supply," he said.

The power minister informed that on 1st September, the demand was 376 MW, which was the highest so far, and yesterday it was 320 MW. He added that during Durga Puja in 2022, the demand was 332 MW, in 2023 it was 311 MW, in 2024 it was 312 MW, and this year the expectation is around 380 MW.

"Last year, around 3,500 pujas were organised across the state. So far this year, 3,500 applications have been received for temporary connections, which will be provided by tomorrow. Special control rooms will be opened for Durga Puja at both division and sub-division levels," he added.

Tripura minister seeks Scindia's help to develop tourism

AGARTALA, Sept 25: Tripura minister Sushanta Chowdhury on Thursday met DoNER Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in New Delhi and sought his help to boost tourism-related infrastructure in the northeastern state.

The Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) minister assured all possible help to strengthen the tourism sector in the state, he said.

"Today I called on DoNER Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in his office in New Delhi and presented the status of ongoing tourism-related projects before him. A detailed discussion also took place over the future plan of the tourism sector," he wrote on Facebook.

Chowdhury, the state tourism minister, said Scindia's help was sought to undertake new projects.

"The DoNER minister assured us of all possible help to develop the tourism sector in the state," he said.

Earlier, Chowdhury met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi on Wednesday and briefed her about the progress of various tourism-related projects in the northeastern state.

"The Union Finance Minister assured all possible help to the tourism department for development of the sector in the northeastern state," he stated on the social media platform. (PTI)

2 militants, one arms dealer arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, Sept 25: Security forces arrested two militants belonging to different proscribed outfits and an arms dealer from Manipur's Imphal West and Bishnupur districts, police said on Thursday.

An active member of the banned Prepak was apprehended from Paona Bazar in Imphal West district on Wednesday, a senior officer said.

The militant was accused of extorting ₹ 5,000 from a person in Kachhing area, he said.

A cadre of the banned Peoples' Liberation Army was arrested from Tronglaoba area in Bishnupur district, he said.

The arrest had triggered a protest by locals who blocked a road in Tronglaoba area, demanding the release of the person.

Security forces also apprehended a 48-year-old arms dealer from Moirangkhom Old Thulbuthong Makhong area in Imphal West district on Wednesday, the police said.

One 9 mm pistol with bullets was recovered from his possession, another officer said.

In a separate operation, security forces recovered IED components from Kaibung area in Kachhing district.

One container weighing 1.7 kg, 3 kg of sand, explosive TNT weighing 470 grams, 12 screws, one electric detonator, electric wire, and other items were recovered, the police said.

Security forces have been conducting search operations in Manipur since ethnic violence broke out two years ago. (PTI)

Motorcyclist charred to death as two-wheeler collides with bus in Meghalaya

SHILLONG, Sept 25: A motorcyclist was charred to death after his two-wheeler collided with a bus in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district, police said on Thursday.

The accident occurred in Nongpoh area around 10:20 pm on Wednesday, when the motorcyclist rammed into the night service bus with more than 50 passengers on board, triggering a fire, a senior officer said.

"The motorcycle, coming from the wrong side, rammed into a night service bus on the Guwahati-Shillong route. The two-wheeler was gutted in the fire, which also engulfed the bus," he said.

A fire and emergency services team from Nongpoh rushed to the site and doused the flames, the officer said.

"The motorcyclist died on the spot, and his identity is yet to be ascertained. All passengers were unhurt but shocked, he said.

The body of the deceased was taken to Nongpoh Civil Hospital for post-mortem examination, the officer added. (PTI)

Battlefield spots Doka-La, Cho-La in Sikkim to open for domestic tourists from Oct 1 next: CS

GANGTOK, Sept 25: The Sikkim government has decided to open the battlefield destinations of Doka-La and Cho-La for domestic tourists from October 1, officials said. In a notification earlier this week, Chief Secretary R Telang said Indian tourists carrying voter identity cards would be allowed to visit the two sites under strict guidelines for security and environmental protection.

The decision was taken under the Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan initiative, the notification said. Doka-La and Cho-La are located near the India-Bhutan-China trijunction. According to the notification, tourists will be required to obtain permits from the tourism and civil aviation departments through registered tour operators or travel agencies.

"Permits shall be issued only upon submission of one-night homestay booking confirmation from designated areas along the Silk Route — Kupup, Gnathang, Zuluk or Padamchen," the order stated.

Tourists will be required to pay a permit fee of Rs 1,120 per person, which includes wildlife sanctuary entry and Tsomgo Pokhari Sangrakshan Samiti (TPSS) fee. The fee will be collected by the tourism and civil aviation department and shared with agencies concerned, the order added.

Permits issued by the home department for official purposes will be exempt from the fee.

The government has capped the daily entry at 25 tourist vehicles and 25 bikers for both the places.

"Only vehicles with engine capacity of 1,400 cc and

above will be permitted due to the challenging terrain," the notification said.

No parking fee collection will be allowed along the route without prior approval from the state government.

The prescribed fare has been fixed at Rs 12,000 for a two-day package in category Z vehicles and Rs 11,000 for category J vehicles. Adequate security arrangements will be in place, officials said.

Personnel from the Army's 17 Mountain Division, Sikkim Police and the tourism department will be deployed at Kupup and Cho-La checkpoints.

"A police escort shall accompany tourists from Kupup," the notification added.

To manage traffic and weather-related risks, tourists will move in staggered groups. Two batches will depart daily from Tsomgo (Cho-La diversion) at 10 am and 11 am for Cho-La, while from Kupup to Doka-La, departures will be at 9 am and 10 am.

The staggered timing has been devised to ensure the availability of parking facilities.

Tour operators have also been directed to ensure strict environmental safeguards.

"No littering or damage shall be allowed in these pristine areas. All tourist vehicles must carry garbage bags and dispose of the waste only at designated collection points at Tsomgo and Kupup," the order said.

The tourism department clarified that express permits issued for the 25 vehicles would require checking only at 3rd Mile, Cho-La, Nathula and Doka-La diversions. (PTI)

Sikkim CM flags off NaMo Marathon as part of Sewa Pakhwada observance

GANGTOK, Sept 25: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Thursday flagged off the NaMo Marathon, organised by the state's Sports and Youth Affairs Department at Ridge Park here as part of the ongoing Sewa Pakhwada observance.

The marathon, in which 501 people took part, was held to promote physical fitness, community participation, and inspire citizens to adopt an active lifestyle in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Fit India, Healthy India' vision, officials said.

"This event not only celebrates the spirit of fitness and unity but also embodies the values of service, dedication, and collective responsibility towards society," said Tamang in a social media post.

He said it was truly inspiring to witness the enthusiastic participation of people from all walks of life, coming together with great energy and zeal to make the occasion memorable. Speaking to reporters, Sports and Youth Affairs Department Secretary Yangchen Doma Tamang said out of 711 registered participants, 501 took part in the event, including participants from other states.

The marathon featured four categories — 21 km (open men and women), 21 km (masters/veterans above 45 years), 3 km (schoolchildren aged 10–12 years) and 3 km (schoolchildren aged 13–16 years).

Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Department Raju Bhasnet was also present on the occasion. (PTI)

Gun salute to be offered to the deity by jawans of Tripura State Rifles

Only 2 hands of Goddess Durga visible at this puja in Tripura

AGARTALA, Sept 25: Only two hands of Goddess Durga idol are visible at the Durga puja held adjacent to the Ujjayanta Palace here, a priest said.

The idol is also offered meat and fish along with fruits as prasad during the Durga puja, he said.

"The Durga idol is only 12 feet with only two hands visible during the Durga puja festivities," chief priest Jayanta Bhattacharjee told PTI.

On the worship of the two-hand Durga idol, Bhattacharjee said previously, the Manikya dynasty used to worship a 10-hand Durga idol, but it was Barchandra Manikya who started the worship of two-hand Durga after Queen Sulakshna Devi fainted on seeing the 10-hand deity in Amarapur in Tripura's Gomat district around 550 years ago.



He said the 'prasad' to be offered to the deity is unique, as meat and fish, along with fruits, during the Durga puja days, which has been a ritual at Durgabari puja for the past 148 years.

The chief priest said another thing special about the Durgabari

Bangladesh around 600 years ago, Bhattacharjee said.

"Over the years, Durga puja was organised by the Manikya dynasty in different locations from Bangladesh to Tripura till the merger agreement was signed with the Union of India in 1949. As per the agreement, the state government has started running the temple," he said.

The Durga puja at the Durgabari temple located adjacent to the royal palace here will enter its 149th celebrations at this present location this year, he said.

The chief priest said the chief minister, ministers, MLAs and common people visit the Durgabari temple during Durga puja.

This year, Durga Puja will be celebrated from September 28 to October 2. (PTI)

Second chances very important in life: Anupam Kher on re-releasing 'Tanvi The Great' in theatres

MUMBAI, Sept 25: Actor-filmmaker Anupam Kher says he is someone who strongly believes in second chances and that is what he wants to give his film "Tanvi The Great" which is set to be re-released in theatres on September 26.

Starring debutant actor Shubhangi Dutt, the movie marked Kher's return to the director's chair after the 2002 film "Om Jai Jagdish". The film charts the emotional journey of a young autistic woman who is determined to realise her late father's dream of honouring the Indian tricolor at the world's highest battlefield – Siachen. "I think second chances are very important in life. We get disappointed from the first chance but life should be hopeful," Kher told PTI in an interview. The movie, which was initially released in theatres in July, will return to theatres in 17 to 20 cities. "One show at a time. And then we will see how it does. The risk is only for one week. The reward can be for 10 weeks," he said. Asked how he coped with the film's box office performance, Kher said, "I was upset, sad and even cried. If you work hard for anything and you don't get the (desired) result, (you feel pain). But the idea is to not give up."

The film had a box office clash with Mohit Suri's "Saiyaara", which became a runaway hit and earned over ₹ 560 crore.

Kher said nobody anticipated that "Saiyaara" would click with the audience like that. "I think even Adi Chopra (producer Aditya Chopra) did not know that this

("Saiyaara") would do so well. Even Mohit Suri did not know... I am very happy that it has done so well. Nobody knew. We were tracking ahead of 'Saiyaara'. It doesn't matter. "I must say that I have great love for both Ahaan (Pandey) and Aneet (Padda). I run an acting school. So I hear the heartbeats of newcomers clearly. My father used to say: 'The one who comes first, he always has the intention that he has to come first. And the one who comes second and third, he can always try to come first.'"

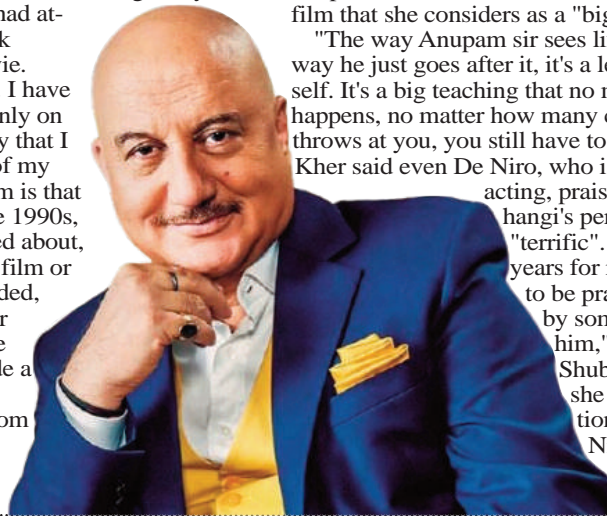
Kher said he is bringing the film back to theatres as it was appreciated by many people around the world, including Robert De Niro, his friend and "Silver Linings Playbook" co-star, who had attended the New York premiere of the movie.

"I don't lose hope. I have spent 40 years not only on success. I always say that I am a success story of my failures. The problem is that in the 1990s and late 1990s, film used to be talked about, whether it is a good film or not. "Now, it is decided, whether it worked or not (according to the box office). We made a beautiful film and it got good reaction from everyone. So, I felt that we should, in a

limited manner, try again."

The veteran star, who has done over 400 films across languages and mediums, said they screened "Tanvi" everywhere, including the students of D.A.V. School, where he also studied. "I think it is very important for Shubhangi to be given another chance because, today's generation feels very immediately. When we started (career), social media was not that much. Now, social media makes you realize again and again that, 'Oh man, the film did not do well'. All the people who have put in their faith, they will get a chance to watch it again." Actor Shubhangi said she is happy to get another chance to showcase her performance to the audience in "Tanvi", a film that she considers as a "big blessing".

"The way Anupam sir sees life and the way he just goes after it, it's a learning in itself. It's a big teaching that no matter what happens, no matter how many curveballs life throws at you, you still have to keep going." Kher said even De Niro, who is the god of acting, praised Shubhangi's performance as "terrific". "It will take years for many actors to be praised like this by somebody like him," he said. Shubhangi said she became emotional when De Niro lauded her. (PTI)



VISHAL JETHWA ON 'HOMEBOUND': A DREAM COME TRUE

MUMBAI, Sept 25 "Homebound" has been a journey of many firsts for Vishal Jethwa but the actor's most cherished memory is taking his mother to Cannes on a business class ticket.

The actor, who started out with TV show "Maharana Pratap" in 2013-14 and broke out in movies with his negative role in Rani Mukerji-fronted "Mardaani 2" in 2019, stars as Chandan Kumar in the Neeraj Ghaywan-directorial.

The movie had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival under the Un Certain Regard category and was recently selected to represent India at the Oscars in the Best International Feature category.

"Like every other child living in a chawl, I would also get amazed by seeing a 'vimaan' (airplane) in the sky. It was a fascination for us. I had this dream of travelling abroad. I remember whenever one of my uncles, who lived in London, would visit us, we would think 'Oh, he is such a big man'. So I had this dream to be on a flight with my mother," Jethwa told PTI in an interview.

The 31-year-old actor said while working on "Maharana Pratap", he first got the chance to travel by a plane but ironically missed his flight.

"I have been in the industry for 15 years, but I never got the opportunity to travel abroad for work. (But) In the last one year, I've done five international trips with my film. I went to London, Switzerland, Paris, Cannes, Dubai and now Canada (TIFF). 'Homebound' brought a lot for me, both in my life and as an actor.

"However, the joy of travelling with my mother internationally is very precious to me. It was my dream come true moment. It might be normal for others to take a flight and it is easy for them. But for me it was a special moment to travel with my mom in business class. I take immense pride in this moment," he said. The movie, which marks Ghaywan's return to direction after his much acclaimed debut with "Masaan" in 2015, is inspired by

journalist Basharat Peer's NYT article "Taking Amrit Home (A Friendship, a Pandemic and a Death Beside the Highway)".

It revolves around the friendship between Chandan (Jethwa) and Shoaib (Ishaan Khatter), who aspire to join the police force for respect, but find their dreams challenged by caste, religious barriers and the lockdown during the pandemic.

Jethwa revealed that he almost missed out on the movie as he had his first audition didn't work out.

"I first auditioned for the role of Shoaib and someone else was selected for Chandan's part. I felt bad that they did not consider me for any role but some last moment changes happened and then they called me for another round," he recalled.

The actor said when he was called again, he told the casting team to be thorough as he did not want to lose a movie that was backed by Dhama and would be directed by Ghaywan.

"Unfortunately, I had a cast on my leg as I had hurt myself at home. I requested them (casting team) to not tell anyone about my injury as I was scared about losing the role... I met Ishaan at Dhama office and they were checking our chemistry, we read together, they recorded us. And then they were confident I could play Chandan."

Jethwa, who lost 10 kgs to play Chandan, believes he was destined to portray the role as his character's reality somewhat mirrors his own. "I lived a lower-middle class life, I stayed in a chawl, then we started living in a better house, now I meet big people. I've seen both lows and highs. I've done bit roles. I have been part of shows that ran for three-four years. All these factors have always helped me in my acting. For an actor, the bad times are rather a great lesson because you learn a lot from it," he said.

During the course of the film, Jethwa said Ishaan became a good friend and they could understand each other despite coming from vastly different backgrounds. (PTI)

Amazon MX Player unveils first look of 'Made in India - A Titan Story' on Make in India anniversary



MUMBAI, Sept 25: Amazon MX Player on Thursday unveiled the first look of "Made in India - A Titan Story", a show that traces the extraordinary vision of J R D Tata and Xerxes Desai in the making of the iconic Titan brand.

The series features veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah as Tata and Jim Sarbh as Desai, the maverick executive credited with shaping Titan for the Tata Group.

The ensemble cast also includes Namita Dubey, Vaibhav Tatwawadi, Kaveri Seth, Lakshvir Saran and Paresh Ganatra. Directed by Robby Grewal and written by Karan Vyas, the show is produced by Prabhleen Sandhu under Almighty Motion Picture.

Shah said portraying J.R.D. Tata was both an honour and a responsibility.

"He was a man who combined vision with humanity, and it is rare to encounter stories that are so deeply intertwined with the very making of modern India. 'Made in India' is not just about a company, it is about a legacy that continues to inspire generations," he added.

Sarbh said the show is about "grit, innovation, and above all, believing in an idea larger than oneself."

"Xerxes Desai was a visionary who saw possibilities where others doubted. Portraying him allowed me to explore the conviction it takes to build something enduring from scratch," he said.

Amogh Dusat, Head of Content at Amazon MX Player, said the series aims to celebrate India's spirit of innovation and resilience. "Our collaboration with the Tata Group to showcase Titan's journey marks the first chapter of this ambitious franchise. It is a tale of enterprise and leadership that shaped not just an iconic brand of Titan watches but also our nation's confidence on the global stage," he said. "Made in India" will premiere early next year on Amazon MX Player and will be available for free across the MX Player app, Amazon shopping app, Prime Video, Fire TV and Airtel Xstream. (PTI)

KAREENA KAPOOR BEGINS SHOOTING FOR MEGHNA GULZAR'S 'DAAYRA'

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor on Thursday started shooting for "Daayra", her upcoming movie with acclaimed director Meghna Gulzar.

The film, in which she stars opposite Prithviraj Sukumaran, is the 68th feature project of her career.

Sharing a montage of videos from the set featuring herself, Gulzar and Sukumaran, Kapoor wrote on Instagram: "Day 1, 68th film. 'Daayra' with the most amazing @meghnagulzar and @therealprithvi... Send love and blessings."

Gulzar, the director of critical hits such as "Talvar", "Raazi", "Chhapaak" and "Sam Bahadur", also shared the news on her Instagram page.

"A journey of blurred and crossed lines... We begin," she wrote.

"Daayra" is billed as a crime-drama thriller that explores the age-old paradox of crime, punishment, and justice. It taps into the pulse of the people as it confronts the topical and diabolical realities unfolding in society today, as per the official logline.

Kareena was last seen alongside Tabu and Kriti Sanon in the 2024 comedy "Crew" as well as Rohit Shetty's "Singham Again" opposite Ajay Devgn.

Sukumaran directed and starred in 2025's "L2: Empuraan" and also appeared in "Sarazmeen" alongside Kajol and Ibrahim Ali Khan. (PTI)



I just wanted to get a good picture to hang at home: Vikrant Massey on winning National Award

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Just 20 seconds with the president. That was the thought racing through Vikrant Massey's head moments before being presented the National Award, his attention focused on following protocol and getting a good photograph to hang in his home.

At the 71st National Film Awards ceremony on Tuesday, Massey was recognised for his performance in Vidhu Vinod Chopra's "12th Fail", which also won the best feature film award.

For Massey, 38, it was a surreal moment and yet to sink in. "I think it will take a couple of days for... just sit in my space and go through what's happened. But it's a great feeling. Not just me, my family and well wishers, they are all very happy," the actor told PTI in an interview.

"The only thing that was going through my mind was that I follow the protocol because you will be standing with the President of the country. In my mind, I was thinking that I should follow them properly and hit the mark because you don't get more than 20 seconds. So my attention was on those

things. And I just wanted to get a good picture to hang at home," he added.

Massey shared the honour with superstar Shah Rukh Khan, who was rewarded for his blockbuster movie "Jawan".

Besides Shah Rukh, Massey was seen interacting with Rani Mukerji, who won the best actress honour for "Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway" and Malayalam superstar Mohanlal, the recipient of the coveted Dadasaheb Phalke award for the year 2023.

"It feels great to be honoured alongside someone like him (SRK)... He has inspired so many people. So to be sharing the stage with him, with Rani Mukerji ma'am, Mohanlal sir, and such incredible talent—everybody from regional cinema, from the farthest corner of your country—what I mean to say is that when you sit with such great people, it feels good," he said.

Quizzed about his interactions with the three icons of Indian cinema, Massey said they were all very "excited and happy".

"It was wonderful to see Shah Rukh sir and Rani ma'am, they both have worked for more than

30 years and they still have that childlike excitement and quality after achieving so much in their life. And they continue to inspire generations... to be seated alongside them, to see that excitement in them, to see the artist inside them wanting to better themselves even after so much success is so inspiring," he added.

Massey said both Shah Rukh and Mukerji praised his performance in "12th Fail", which was based on author Anurag Pathak's bestselling book that chronicled the journey of IPS officer Manoj Kumar Sharma and his wife, IRS officer Shradha Joshi.

The movie, which also starred Medha Shankr, emerged as a box office success in October 2023 and earned rave reviews from critics.

"They were happy. In fact, Rani ma'am, when the film came out, she sent a message. And after that, I met her two-three times. And she congratulated me and my work. And not just '12th Fail' but also the other films that I've done. So, she's been very generous."

When the movie came to him, Massey said he and Chopra both

recognised its "tremendous potential".

"We wanted to go out there and share Manoj Kumar Sharma's story because it is an underdog's story which is so Indian in nature... I mean, we are very resilient as people, as Indians, we've seen some of the toughest and darkest times... And we continue to strive to better ourselves each day. We recognised that potential, that this could probably inspire people.

"Winning awards, everything, I don't think you can plan all these things. You don't go out there wanting to make a film saying, 'this film will win an award'. You can't do art with that intent."

Massey, who began his journey on the small screen with shows such as "Dharam Veer" and "Balika Vadhu", is known for bringing a quiet intensity and sensitivity to his roles, making him one of the most versatile performers of his generation.

The actor started his journey in films with Vikramaditya Motwane's "Lootera" and has given critically-lauded performances in movies and shows such as "A Death in the Gunj", "Dil

Dhadakne Do", "Lipstick Under My Burkha", "Chhapaak", "Mirzapur", "Sector 36" and "Cargo".

"Getting to realise your dreams is such a wonderful blessing... It's heartwarming, wonderful and very gratifying. I started off my journey way back in 2004 through television. And people have been very generous, very kind. They've enjoyed watching me on television.

"They watch me on their mobile phones and laptops. And they also make time to go to the cinema screen and watch my movies. So, it's a wonderful feeling."

More than the pressure to do better with his next projects, Massey said the National Award win instills a sense of responsibility in him. "My world view remains the same. My process remains the same... I'm just thinking about that all the more - that I need to go back to my basics and not change anything within me because the larger idea is to tell stories, to inspire people, to try being the voice for the voiceless and represent the common man with utmost sincerity. (PTI)

India will hope to break the jinx of never winning a women's World Cup in the coming weeks

Everyone believes they are match-winners now: Smriti Mandhana

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana says the biggest change in the women's team since the last T20 World Cup is the belief that every player is a potential "match-winner" now, a shift driven by greater focus on fitness and preparation.

India will hope to break the jinx of never winning a women's World Cup in the coming weeks, and they open their campaign against Sri Lanka in Guwahati on September 30.

"I think our belief has changed a lot and it only changes with what work you put behind it. When the effort is there, the fight will always be there," Mandhana told JioStar.

"That's one thing that has changed with this team — everyone believes they are match-winners."

The 29-year-old opener admitted that the previous T20 World Cup left a deep mark on her as an athlete.

"The last T20 World Cup was



something which hit me quite a lot. I thought to myself, 'I don't want to feel like this as an athlete in my life'. Post that, a lot of fitness and nutritional changes have come into place," she said.

in India since 2013 when I was a kid. I am really excited to see how the stadiums turn out and the way they will support.

"The Women's Premier League (WPL) has made us immune to the loud crowd as well. Nothing can beat people cheering India at the stadiums," she added.

Recalling her India debut, Mandhana said the memory of receiving her first national jersey will stay with her forever.

"I remember I was 17 when I got the India jersey in my room. I don't think I can forget it. I wore it and sent the photos to my parents and my brother. They were very emotional.

"Challenges are a part of who you are. The biggest challenge for me was, I was in Sangli, and not many girls used to play cricket then. A lot of times, for camps, I had to travel from Sangli to Pune, and spend 4-5 months away from home. As a 14-year-old to do that, and miss out on school, it was very challenging.

"I think the Commonwealth semi-final against Australia was when I felt extremely proud about wearing this jersey," she recalled.

India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, meanwhile, reflected on her own journey and her dream as a young girl.

"As a girl, it was very hard for me to dream about playing for the country. I always wanted to open with Virender Sehwag, not knowing that you can't play in a men's team," she said.

All-rounder Deepti Sharma highlighted the team's evolving mindset under head coach Amol Muzumdar.

"Our mindset has changed now a bit, regardless of the team we are facing and the format. We focus on what we can pull off and always talk about positive things and apply the same on the ground.

"We talk to Amol sir in our practice sessions and the main thing is to try and come out of our comfort zone to plan for different situations," she said. (PTI)

Jamil urges clubs, AIFF to resolve player release issue through 'dialogue'



NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Indian men's team head coach Khalid Jamil on Thursday urged the clubs and the All India Football Federation to find a solution that "balances club and national commitments" through "constructive dialogue" after 14 players from three Indian Super League sides delayed joining the national camp.

Jamil had named 30 probables for the preparatory camp ahead of India's crucial Asian Cup qualifying round matches against Singapore on October 9 (away) and October 14 (home). But 14 players, including Bengaluru FC skipper Sunil Chhetri, are yet to be released by their clubs, while one player is unavailable due to illness.

Three players -- Brandon Fernandes, Asheer Akhtar and Farukh Choudhary -- have been added, bringing the current group to 18. They have been training in Bengaluru since September 20.

Jamil admitted that not having enough players, especially in defence, has affected team training. So far, only two defenders -- Hmingthanmawia Ralte and Asheer Akhtar -- have joined the camp.

"Our preparations are always team-oriented, not dependent on individuals. Still, the absence of players in some positions has naturally affected training," Jamil, who took charge as head coach last month, told PTI.

"Some players will be joining in phases, and we are working to make the best of the available resources. In the long run, I believe it is important to work together to find a solution that balances club and national commitments," he added.

Apart from Bengaluru FC, East Bengal and Punjab FC are the other clubs who have delayed the release of their players. The 14 players were to join the camp towards the end of this month.

The 48-year-old Jamil had deliberately excluded players from Mohun Bagan SG and FC Goa, given their involvement in the AFC Champions League Two campaign.

Mohun Bagan SG face Sepahan SC of Iran on September 30, while FC Goa play FC Istiklol of Tajikistan on October 1.

"With Mohun Bagan and FC Goa, the situation was clear from the beginning as they had important continental fixtures. We fully respect that and planned accordingly.

"Going forward, we hope to maintain similar clarity with all clubs. It is, after all, a team game, and if we have such clarity, we would know which players to plan ahead with," said Jamil, a former India international and ex head coach of NorthEast United and Jamshepur FC.

Jamil had begun his stint on a positive note, guiding the team to a third-place finish at the CAFA Nations Cup in Tajikistan earlier this month in the country's maiden appearance in the tournament.

The tournament provided a valuable platform to build upon. The focus now shifts to two crucial Group C fixtures of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup Final Round Qualifiers -- a double-header against Singapore on October 9 (in Singapore) and October 14 (in Goa).

Jamil underlined the importance of the upcoming two matches against Singapore.

"We are fully aware of the significance of these two games. Positive results can give us strong momentum in our qualification campaign, while setbacks would make the path much more difficult," said Jamil.

India, currently with a point from two matches (0-0 vs Bangladesh and 0-1 vs Hong Kong), are determined to improve their position in Group C, where only the top team qualify for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup. Singapore, the group leaders, are on four points from as many matches.

Players in the National Camp (18):

Goalkeepers: Amrinder Singh, Gurmeet Singh, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

Defenders: Hmingthanmawia Ralte, Asheer Akhtar.

Midfielders: Brandon Fernandes, Danish Farooq Bhat, Jithin MS, Macarthon Louis Nickson, Mohammed Aimen, Vibin Mohanan.

Forwards: Farukh Choudhary, Irfan Yadwad, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Manvir Singh (jr), Mohammed Sanan K, Parthib Gogoi, Vikram Partap Singh. (PTI)

BFI names 23-member team for Asian Youth Games

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) has announced a 23-member squad for the 3rd Asian Youth Games 2025 in Bahrain, with training camp now underway at NSNIS Patiala until October 20.

The team was selected based on performances at the 6th U-17 Junior Boys and Girls National Boxing Championship 2025, where gold medalists earned direct entry into the squad, and silver medalists were named as reserves in their respective categories.

Among the selected athletes are standout performers from the Asian U-17 Championships held in July 2025, where India clinched 43 medals and finished second overall. This achievement served as a reminder of India's growing strength in youth boxing, challenging traditional powerhouses in the sport.

"In the past few months, our young boxers have shown they can stand toe-to-toe with the best in Asia, bringing home strong results at continental and national levels.

"This camp is about building on that momentum, sharpening their skills, and preparing them to be serious medal contenders in Bahrain, while underlining the rising strength of Indian boxing," said Ajay Singh, President, BFI in a release.

The 14-member squad, comprising seven boys and seven girls, is backed by six coaches, two physiotherapists, and one doctor, ensuring a strong support structure for the athletes.

Among them are gold medalists Dhruv Kharb, Udham Singh Raghav, Khushi Chand, Ahaana Sharma, and Chandrika Bhoreshi Pujari, who are now sharpening their skills under head coaches Vinod Kumar (Boys U-17) and Jitender Raj Singh (Girls U-17).

With a blend of emerging talent and proven champions, Team India is poised to make a significant impact at the Asian Youth Games, aiming to convert potential into podium finishes and solidify its position among Asia's elite in youth boxing. (PTI)

Tanvi Patri, Bornil Changmai to lead 36-member Indian squad in Badminton Asia U-17 & U-15 C'ships

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Asian U-15 champion Tanvi Patri and former title winner Bornil Changmai will spearhead a 36-member Indian squad at the Badminton Asia U-17 & U-15 Championships, scheduled in Chengdu, China from October 21 to 26.

Both Tanvi and Changmai will step up to the U-17 category this time as India looks to extend its strong run in the continental age-group event.

The country has enjoyed back-to-back successful campaigns in Chengdu, bagging a gold and a bronze in 2024, and finishing with one gold, one silver and a bronze in the 2023 edition.

The Indian team was selected based on the players' performance in the just-concluded Yonex-Sunrise Ashwani Gupta Memorial All India Sub Junior (U-15 & U-17) Ranking Badminton Tournament 2025, held at Panchkula, Haryana, from September 13 to 21, 2025.

"India's consistent success in the continental championships over the years reflects the strength of our junior development program. This squad has several promising players with the potential to bring home medals, which highlights the depth and talent within the team," said Badminton Association of India (BAI) Secre-



tary General, Sanjay Mishra in a release.

Sharayu Ranjane will feature in all three categories of U-15, teaming up with Soyara Shelar in girls' doubles and Hemant Sri Sammetla in mixed doubles.

Punith S and Deepak Raj Aditi, who will

partner each other in the U-17 mixed doubles, will also be in action in boys and girls doubles respectively.

India's squad:

U-15 Boys singles: Pushkar Sai, Wazir Singh, Prabhu Dhyani, Dhakshan SL

Girls singles: Anvi Rathore, Shaina Manimuthu, Sharayu Ranjane, Hansini Chandram

Boys doubles: Swayamdyuti Ghosh/Shaurya Singh Rana, Vivaan Bishu/Chinmay Krishna Nimmagadda

Girls doubles: Sharayu Ranjane/Soyara Shelar, Vibhava KR/Raksha N

Mixed doubles: Hemant Sri Sammetla/Sharayu Ranjane, Arjun A/Nayonika A

U-17

Boys singles: Bornil Akash Changmai, Jagsher Singh Khangurra, Hardik Divyash, Nishchal Chand

Girls singles: Tanvi Patri, Shantipriya Hazarika, Lakshya Rajesh, Diksha SR

Boys doubles: Charan Ram Thippana/Hari Krishna Veeram Reddy, Pavan S/Punith S

Girls doubles: Deepak Raj Aditi/P Vriddhi, Aikya Shetty/Suhina

Mixed doubles: Punith S/D Aditi, Jangjeet Singh Kajla/Jananika R. (PTI)

Mbappé is on a scoring run for Madrid before visiting Atletico in the capital derby

BARCELONA, Sept 25: Only six weeks into La Liga and Atletico Madrid already faces what seems to be a must-win derby when it hosts Real Madrid on Saturday.

Despite revamping a significant part of the squad this summer, Atletico is off to its worst start — two wins in six matches — since coach Diego Simeone took over more than a decade ago. They take on their top rival well behind in the standings: Real Madrid leads the league and Atletico Madrid is eighth, nine points adrift.

Key matchups

Madrid is the only team to have won all six rounds. That run has been fueled by the prolific Kylian Mbappé.

The France striker has seven goals, three more than the next best scorer, and has failed to find the net only in one game. He scored twice

on Tuesday, a 4-1 victory over Levante. Atletico's poor form comes after a busy summer in which it bought the likes of Villarreal playmaker Alex Baena, United States midfielder Johnny Cardoso, and defenders David Hanzko and Matteo Ruggeri. Injuries to Baena and Cardoso, among others, have not helped Simeone.

It will be Xabi Alonso's first Spanish capital derby as Madrid's coach after he spent 2009-14 playing for the club.

Second-placed Barcelona hosts Real Sociedad on Sunday, a day after third-placed Villarreal welcomes Athletic Bilbao. Fourth-placed Espanyol visits Girona, which is winless at the bottom of the table, on Friday.

Players to watch

Atletico's fortunes may hinge on Argentina forward Julian Alvarez,

who is coming off a hat trick to help beat Rayo Vallecano 3-2 on Wednesday. That was his first treble since moving to Europe in 2022.

Madrid's Vinicius Junior will be in the spotlight both for the reactions of Atletico's fans, some of whom have subjected him among the worst racial abuse he has experienced, and because of speculation regarding his long-term future with the club.

Once a set starter under former coach Carlo Ancelotti, Vinicius has seen his playing time reduced by Alonso. That comes amid media reports that his talks with Madrid about renewing his contract set to expire in June 2027 have broken down.

Atletico will also recover striker Alexander Sorloth, who often plays as a substitute, after his one-game suspension. (AP)

Cycling: Rajasthan to host inaugural Tour de Thar

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Rajasthan will host the inaugural Tour de Thar, an international-level endurance cycling event, on November 23 featuring three categories of 300km Relay, 200km, and 100km races with over 2500 national and international participants, the sports ministry has announced.

The event will be flagged off at Norandesar village in Bikaner.

"Spanning the smooth, expansive stretches of the Amritsar-Jamnagar Expressway, the race through the sands of endurance will present Thar desert as a stage for showcasing courage and determination," the ministry stated. The curtain raiser of the event was organised in Delhi in the presence of Union Minister for Law and Justice, Arjun Ram Meghwal and Union Minister for Labour and Employment and Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya. (PTI)

Rupinder feels it has become difficult to score more goals from dragflicks

India has potential to win Jr hockey WC but need to work on game management: Rupinder



NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Olympic medallist former dragflicker Rupinder Pal Singh feels India has the potential to finish on the podium in the upcoming FIH Junior World Cup but said success in the event will depend on game management by the young players.

India has won the Junior World Cup in 2001 (Hobart) and 2016 (Lucknow).

India is set to host the Junior World Cup again in Chennai and Madurai

from November 28 till December 10 this year, and Rupinder has been working with the junior dragflickers at the request of his dear friend and former teammate PR Sreejesh, who is the coach of the junior men's side.

"Sreejesh is doing well with the team at the moment. We know the players are young, have speed and talent but what is important is game sense, game management. They need to learn how to manage the game minute by minute. The more they play they will get that experience. They have everything but just need to work on game management," Rupinder said in a virtual press conference.

"This team has the potential but it depends on how they perform on that day and manage their game. Sreejesh is doing a good job, so I am hoping his experience will benefit the team."

Rupinder conducted a 10-day dragflick camp with the junior team

earlier this month in Bengaluru.

"I love to do anything related to hockey. I was in Bengaluru for a few days to work with the junior team dragflickers. I am not a full-time coach. I am just trying to help by sharing my experience. I am trying to pass on my dragflicking expertise."

Rupinder, who was a member of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics bronze-winning team, currently plays in the Hockey India League after retiring from the game. He was captain of title-winning side Shraachi Rarh Bengal Tigers last year. But this year, he has been roped in by SG Pipers for Rs 12 lakh in the mini auction on Wednesday.

The lanky former defender admitted it is increasingly becoming difficult to keep the body in shape after retirement.

"It is very difficult but in Gurdaspur I am continuing my strength and fitness training. I am trying to devote 1-2 hours to gym work. Last year, I thought it

would be my last HIL because I felt it would be difficult after retiring from international hockey.

"But at the same time, it is difficult to live without hockey. I am just playing for passion. I am trying to manage my fitness but I can't be the same like 20-21 years back and you have to accept that."

"I just share my experiences and learnings. If I can't share my experiences with the juniors then it is getting wasted."

Rupinder feels it has become difficult to score more goals from dragflicks as the defence of every side has improved.

"The defensive structure has improved a lot. The first rusher is always maintaining his line and the goalkeeper is covering the right. So, you need to have a lot of variation. It's not easy these days," said Rupinder, who has scored over 120 international goals in 223 appearances. (PTI)

E-AUCTION FOR DISPLAY COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING CONTRACT AT TINSUKIA DIVISION

E-Auction for display commercial Advertising contract at Level Crossing Gates & Railway Colonies of Dibrugarh Town, New Tinsukia, Dulaijan, Naharkatia, Simaluguri & Mariani over Tinsukia Division. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Trips/Days. 1096.

Auction Catalogue No. TSK-AdvT-OOH-31		
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	ADVT-TSK-DBRT-OH-8-22-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	Commercial advertisement of 05 Railway colonies at Dibrugarh Town
AA/2	ADVT-TSK-DBRT-OH-4-22-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	Commercial advertisement of 59 LC gates from Dibrugarh to Tinsukia station section
AA/3	ADVT-TSK-GLGT-OH-7-22-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	commercial advertisement of 14 LC Gates from Furkating Jn. to Mariani Jn. section
AA/4	ADVT-TSK-NTSK-OH-10-22-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	Commercial advertisement at New Tinsukia Colonies
AA/5	ADVT-TSK-NHK-OH-102-22-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	Advertisement Commercial contract for display of 3 Nos of hoarding boards (Total area 1840.63sqft) located at Naharkatia Railway Colony
AA/6	ADVT-TSK-MJN-OH-5-22-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	commercial advertisement of 18 LC gates from Makum to Dangri section
AA/7	ADVT-TSK-FKG-OH-6-22-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	commercial advertisement of 40 LC gates from Tinsukia to Furkating section
AA/8	ADVT-TSK-DJG-OH-101-22-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	Advertisement Commercial contract for display of 3 Nos of hoarding boards (Total area 2357sqft) located at Dulaijan Railway Colony

Auction Start Date & Time: 11.00 hrs. Auction Close Date & Time: 12.40 hrs. of 09-10-2025. Prospective bidders are requested to visit E-Auction Leasing Module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Commercial Manager (IC), Tinsukia

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India vs SL: Last chance for India to check out Jitesh Sharma as 'finisher'

DUBAI, Sept 25: Sanju Samson being an apparent middle-order misfit will certainly worry head coach Gautam Gambhir and the Indian team management might be tempted to check out Jitesh Sharma during their inconsequential final Super 4 encounter against Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup here on Friday.

Once India won against Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, which had lost both its Super 4 encounters against Bangladesh and Pakistan, was ousted from the competition and will be taking the field to complete formalities.

The stage now seems set for a possible India-Pakistan showdown in the final on Sunday.

Apart from Samson, who is not fitting into the puzzle called the Indian batting order, the only other worry at the moment could be missing 10 catches so far in the tournament, including five against Bangladesh en route to final.

In a high-stakes game, the margins are thin and even mystery spinner Varun Chakravarty, who suffered on account of dropped catches on multiple occasions, agreed that there is a lot of room for improvement in that aspect.

"As they say, you can't give excuses

at this level. As a team, we have to definitely start catching all those because we have qualified for the finals and we should be taking all those catches," said Chakravarty, who got a couple of wickets against Bangladesh but also saw a few chances go begging off his bowling.

He did give benefit of doubt to the fielders because the Dubai Stadium's floodlights are not high towers and resemble football stadium lights.

"But if you ask me, the 'ring of fire' (floodlight design) definitely is a little bit of disturbance as it comes in the eyesight sometimes. We have to get acclimatised to it," the mystery spinner said.

While fielding is one aspect that needs attention, there are also little chinks in the Indian armoury which are being overlooked because of the comfortable victories in all the five games that Suryakumar Yadav's men have played so far.

Against Bangladesh, Samson wasn't even considered good enough to come inside the top seven of the line-up and that begs a question as to what is he doing in the team if he isn't good enough to come ahead of Axar Patel.



The promotion of Shivam Dube as No. 4 was understandable because of his 'match-up' against wrist spinners but it didn't work in order to keep the left-right combination in the middle. Hardik Pandya was sent ahead of him along with two left-handers in Tilak Varma and Axar.

"Sanju is still figuring out how to bat

at No. 5," fielding coach Ryan ten Doeschate had said before the Bangladesh game.

There is a chance that Samson might again be promoted to No.3 in the inconsequential game against Sri Lanka and not sent in that position come Sunday when India play the final.

But that's easier said than done as

Samson doesn't have the game to be a floater, who can attack the bowling in the back-10 when the ball goes softer and the pitch becomes a tad slower.

His fifty against Oman was, at best, scratchy.

It is understood that Samson's past record at the top is preventing the team to drop him but in a format where one needs to assign specific roles, it is Jitesh Sharma who fits into the character of a middle-order slogger come finisher.

A look at his batting sample size at various positions in the IPL over past few seasons will give a clearer picture.

Jitesh at No.5 has played 18 knocks and scored 374 runs in 253 balls at a healthy strike-rate of 147.8 while at No.6 he has performed even better.

He scored 384 runs off 230 balls in 15 innings at a strike rate of 167. The V-dartha stumper, at No.7, has played 76 balls and scored 136 runs in seven innings at a strike-rate of 178.9.

The numbers show that Samson is being forced to don a role which is out of his character while the team management has a 'ready-made option' for the same part.

But as of now, in this bioscope, the director (Gambhir in this case) isn't flexible as far as changing characters are concerned.

Hence Jitesh might have to wait a bit longer but India wouldn't like to pay a price for that. The Sri Lanka match also gives them a chance to rest Jasprit Bumrah (only if he wants) before the grand finale.

Squads:

India: Surya Kumar Yadav (C), Shubman Gill, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Sanju Samson (WK), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Jasprit Bumrah, Varun Chakravarty, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Rinku Singh, Jitesh Sharma (WK), Arshdeep Singh.

Sri Lanka: Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis (WK), Kamil Mishara, Kusal Perera, Charith Asalanka (C), Dasun Shanaka, Kamindu Mendis, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dunieth Wellalage, Dushmantha Chameera, Nuwan Thushara, Nuwanidu Fernando, Binura Fernando, Chamika Karunaratne, Janith Liyanage, Matheesha Pathirana, Maheesh Theekshana.

Match Starts: 8 pm IST. (PTI)

Bumrah available for both Tests against WI; doors shut on Karun, Easwaran

DUBAI, Sept 25: Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was on Thursday named in India's Test squad for the home series against the West Indies, while Devdutt Padikkal replaced Karun Nair, who could not deliver fully on what was "expected" of him in the opportunities offered so far.

While announcing the 15-member squad at the Indian team hotel here, Chairman of Selectors Ajit Agarkar dropped elaborate hints that Nair and Bengal opener Abhinav Easwaran are no longer in the scheme of things.

Rishabh Pant's absence has resulted in Ravindra Jadeja's elevation as vice-captain for the West Indies, while stylish Karnataka left-hander Padikkal, 25, is being seen as a long-term investment along with the 23-year-old Sai Sudharsan, who has locked the No.3 slot.

On Bumrah, Agarkar was clear that the pacer is well-rested and good to go in the series that gets underway on October 2 in Ahmedabad.

"This is a team for both the Test matches. So, he's available for both. We've had a fair break after England. He didn't play the fifth Test either. There's been a month or five weeks of break," he said in response to a PTI query.

"This tournament (the ongoing Asia Cup here where Bumrah is playing) has been fairly spaced out till this last week. He's ready and keen to play both Test matches," Agarkar explained.

However, while speaking on Nair, he was clear that the 30-year-old burly Bengaluru man didn't make full use of opportunities, scor-



ing one fifty in eight innings during the tour of England.

"We feel Padikkal offers a little bit more at this point and I wish we could give everyone 15 or 20 Tests. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way," Agarkar said.

"Padikkal's been in the Test squad. Frankly, we expected a bit more from Karun in England. Devdutt was in the Test squad in Australia, played in Dharamsala against England, got a 50 there. He's shown some decent form within the race," the former pacer stated.

When asked why Sudharsan got the nod when he and Nair had a similar run in England, Agarkar said: "Eventually, it's a little bit about continuity. There were a few changes at No.3 because of the combination that we played."

"But going forward, Sai has shown a lot of promise. We know

him and play the Test."

The selectors felt that Axar Patel as an all-rounder is a better fit.

"You get an extra spinner all-rounder in Axar Patel who wasn't part of the squad to England and we've only picked 15 here. There's nothing to his story."

Pant set to be fit for SA Tests
Agarkar also informed that Jadeja, being the senior-most player, was announced vice-captain as Pant will only be available for the South Africa Tests.

"Rishabh is the vice-captain at the moment and a key player. But unfortunately, he hasn't quite recovered to make this particular Test series. We're hopeful that he'll be available for South Africa. And Jadeja has been one of your top performers," he said.

The series against South Africa will feature two Tests in Kolkata and Guwahati from November 14 to 26. A three-match ODI and five-match T20 International series will follow the red-ball rubber.

The full tour by the Proteas will conclude with the final T20I on December 19.

No update on Shami
On the status of veteran pacer Mohammed Shami, Agarkar said he is unaware of how fit he is and hinted that he is not in the scheme of things.

"I don't have an update," was his quick retort when asked about Shami.

"He's played a couple of matches. But he's not had a lot of cricket. In the last two-three years, I think he's played one match for Bengal and one match in the Duleep Trophy," the chairman said. (PTI)

"If need be, we can always fly

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"If need be, we can always fly

Game is too fast now to rely on one style, so we had to evolve: Satwik-Chirag

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: India's top men's doubles shuttlers Satwiksai Raj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have attributed their resurgence to evolving their game and working on developing service variations in the last 16 months.

The former world No.1 pair has come up with some breathtaking performances in recent times after being sidelined by injuries and illness in the last year-and-a-half. The duo recently won the bronze medal at the World Championships in Paris and followed up the sterling performance by reaching the Hong Kong Super 500 and China Masters Super 750 tournament finals.

On a hot streak, the nine-time BWF World Tour winners, who are currently placed No.7 in the world, are hoping to add a 10th title to their kitty soon, and also credit their string of good performances to a "side-by-side" strategy they have evolved in recent times.

"We have tried playing side-by-side more often, especially after service to control the pushes," Chirag, who relied more on the front-and-back strategy so far, told PTI Videos.

"(Malaysian) coach Tan Kim Her told us that many pairs are doing it, and we too felt it (side-by-side strategy) worked well. Once a guy serves, the other splits up at the front court to catch the pushes. It has really worked for us in the last two to three tournaments," added Chirag. The duo has also worked on service variations, with Chirag developing a flat serve that has become his key weapon.

"In the last couple of tournaments, we've served a lot better than in the

past year. The game is too fast to rely on one style. You need multiple ways to score points, and that's what we are trying to develop," he said.

The last 16 months have been a test of resilience for the duo with Satwik battling a shoulder injury and Chirag facing fitness issues. Their ranking dropped to 27 at one stage, sending alarm bells ringing in the badminton circles.

"Everybody expects results, but there are plenty of factors not in your hands. To return from 27th to the top-8 within a few months after injuries is commendable. Despite setbacks, we've played countless semifinals and two finals, which I think is really commendable."

Their bronze at the World Championships in Paris, their second after 2022, marked a significant confidence boost.

"We had tough draws and opponents we hadn't fared well against in the past. Winning those matches gave us the confidence to believe again. That confidence helped us in the back-to-back finals (in Hong Kong and China Masters in Shenzhen) that followed, even though we couldn't always cross the line," said Chirag.

While their attacking game remains a strength, Satwik admitted the defence still needs fine-tuning.

"Compared to the top pairs, we lag in that area. At crucial moments, we tend to attack rather than defend, unlike the Koreans who stay calm and solid. If we can defend strongly under pressure, it will take us much ahead. We start to open in rallies, but when it heats up, we tend to go attacking, so improving defense under pressure is the key," said Satwik. (PTI)

JR WORLD CUP Women make clean sweep in 50m rifle prone



NEW DELHI, Sept 25: India made a strong start in the ISSF Junior World Cup with the women making a clean sweep of the podium spots in 50m rifle prone, while the men bagged a silver and a bronze in the same event on day one of the competition here on Thursday. Young Anushka Thokur carried on from where she had left off at the Asian Championships in Kazakhstan, where she had won the junior gold in 50m rifle 3 positions recently, taking the top podium spot at the Dr. Kamini Singh Ranges with a score of 621.6.

Another 18-year-old, Anshika bagged the silver totalling 619.2, while 20-year-old Aadhya Agrawal took the bronze with a score of 615.9 in the non-Olympic discipline. Deependra Singh Shekhawat and Rohit Kanyan bagged their maiden international medals, clinching silver and bronze respectively in the men's 50m rifle prone.

The gold in the event went to an Individual Neutral Athlete (AIN).

Deependra, who had competed in the men's 50m rifle 3-positions event at the Asian Championships in Kazakhstan recently, finished second with an aggregate of 617.9 over six rounds of 10 shots each.

Rohit Kanyan took the bronze with a score of 616.3. AIN athlete Kamil Nuriakhmetov took the gold tallying 618.9 points in the 11-shooter field.

The other three Indians in the fray, Nitin Waghmare (615.6), bronze-medallist in Kazakhstan recently, Kushagra Singh (611.6) and Kunal Sharma (590.9) finished 5th, 8th and 11th respectively.

Competitions in Olympic disciplines will commence on Friday with the men's and women's 10m air pistol events lined up. (PTI)

Shreyas takes six-month break from red-ball cricket, to lead Ind A against Aus A in one-dayers



NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Shreyas Iyer was on Thursday appointed India A captain for a three-match one-day series against Australia A in Kanpur from September 30 but he has taken a six-month break from red-ball cricket to strengthen his dodgy back.

Besides Iyer, who recently informed the BCCI's chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar that he cannot take the rigours of red-ball cricket owing to a stiff back, the other key players in the India A one-day squad are Ravi Bishnoi, wicket-keeper-batter Prabhsimran Singh, big-hitting all-rounder Riyan Parag and Ayush Badoni among others.

Top-order batter Abhishek Sharma, who has been India's stand out batter in ongoing the Asia Cup, middle-order batter Tilak Varma, pacers Harshit Rana and Arshdeep Singh will all join the side for the second and third match on October 3 and 5.

Agarkar, while announcing the India squad for the two-Test home series against the West Indies in Dubai said that while no discussion

had been taken on who will lead the ODI side against Australia, the India A series will give Iyer another opportunity to showcase his leadership skills.

"Shreyas Iyer, we want him to play and play well. It's not that he hasn't led India A earlier. He has led his franchise well, and India A obviously helps us look at leaders. But we haven't discussed anything about the Australia ODIs (in October)," said Agarkar. Iyer had conveyed his decision to step away from red-ball cricket to the BCCI.

"Mr Shreyas Iyer has informed the BCCI of his decision to take a six-month break from red-ball cricket," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said in a statement confirming the development that was reported a couple of days ago.

"Having undergone back surgery in the UK and managed his recovery well, he has recently experienced recurring back spasms and stiffness while playing the longer format.

"He wishes to utilise this period to build endurance, body resilience and work on his fitness. In view of his decision, he was not considered for selection for the Irani Cup," Saikia added. Iyer, who underwent a back surgery in 2023, is being seen as a possible leadership candidate in the 50-over team which is currently led by Rohit Sharma.

To that effect, the three-match one-day series against Australia A could help the selectors gauge his potential ahead of the three-match ODI series in Australia in October. (PTI)

MI appoints two-time WC winner Keightley as head coach of women's team

MUMBAI, Sept 25: Mumbai Indians on Thursday appointed former Australia cricketer and two-time World Cup winner Lisa Keightley as the head coach of their women's team.

Keightley, part of Australia's World Cup-winning squads in 1997 and 2005, is one of the most respected coaches in the women's game. Her coaching resume spans Australia, England,

and top global leagues.

MI women are already the most successful team in the history of the Women's Premier League (WPL), winning two titles in just three seasons -- the inaugural edition in 2023 and again in 2025.

"We are thrilled to welcome Lisa Keightley to the Mumbai Indians family. A trailblazer in

women's cricket, Lisa has inspired generations with her passion, expertise and pioneering spirit.

"Her arrival marks an exciting new chapter for Mumbai Indians as we look to scale even greater heights and build on our legacy of excellence," MI owner Nita Ambani said in a statement. (PTI)

If India wins Women's World Cup it would be a seismic moment: England captain Sciver-Brunt



DUBAI, Sept 25: With millions of people across India set to follow the upcoming Women's World Cup, England skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt believes if the hosts lift the trophy, it could be a "seismic moment" which could take the sport to an altogether different level.

India have never won the Women's World Cup though they came close twice, with the 2017 final against England at Lord's still fresh in the minds of the aficionados, where the Mithali Raj-led side lost by nine runs.

Sciver-Brunt was also part of Heather Knight's winning side in 2017, scoring a half-century and bowling five overs.

"Our job is to do everything we can to be in the mix towards the business end of the competition, and we'll be giving it everything we've got," said Sciver-Brunt in a column for ICC ahead of the showpiece being co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from September 30.

"Whether we're there or not, you do get the feeling this could be a seismic moment for the women's game. If you think about India getting over the line in a close game, with all the noise and drama and excitement that it could bring, I think you begin to get a sense of what this competition could do for women's cricket in India," said the 33-year-old pace-bowling all-rounder.

With the Women's Premier League (WPL) becoming a magnet to attract some of the best players from around the world, the stakes for the women's cricket in India have skyrocketed in the last two years, but Sciver-Brunt says the World Cup is an altogether different cup of tea.

"I've seen that growth in the WPL, but a World Cup is something else. I hope whatever outcome we see, we see that. I think we'll all look back on our career when we're retired and mark the World Cup in India as a game-changer. On a personal level, I'm so excited to be captaining my country at a World Cup," said Sciver-Brunt, who has nearly 8,000 runs and close to 200 wickets across the three formats.

Sciver-Brunt added that playing in India was special and nothing quite prepares a player for the experience.

"It's often said but there's nothing quite like playing cricket in India. It really is special. And it's even more special when it's a World Cup. I've been lucky enough to play quite a lot of cricket in India but I think World Cup cricket - especially with the prospect of passionate home support for India - is truly next level.

"We will be trying our hearts out to try and go all the way. The outcome of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup last year shows you that the margins between the teams are not always as big as people might think."

She said that given the competitiveness of the teams participating in the tournament, there won't be easy matches, and acknowledged that teams will have to adapt to the punishing schedule, travel and the ground conditions.

"Every other captain will be thinking the same thing though and there won't be any easy games at this tournament. We'll all have to adapt to the conditions, the travel, the schedule.

"We made the final last time out in New Zealand, in a tournament that was still affected by COVID-19, and obviously back in 2017 we lifted the trophy, so our recent record gives us something to be excited about."

She said that England have a well-balanced side and hoped her players would grab the big moments.

"I believe we've got a good mix of players who've been there and done it before and players for whom this is all very new and exciting. There's a huge amount of talent in this group and we've got a coach who knows exactly what it takes to win a World Cup.

"The job now is to put that all together on the pitch, to win the big moments and to step up when the pressure's on to take us as far as we can possibly go," said Sciver-Brunt whose side would be aiming to win their fifth trophy. (PTI)